

Xplorer guides garden visitors

A perennial challenge for Taranaki's annual Rhododendron and Garden Festival is squeezing accurate maps showing widely distributed gardens on to envelope-sized brochure pages. They simply can't be fitted and still remain to scale.

This year, however, Taranaki Regional Xplorer came to the rescue. By visiting the Festival website www.rhodo.co.nz or any of the council websites www.trc.govt.nz, www.stratford.govt.nz or www.stdc.co.nz and launching Xplorer the viewer could select any Festival garden and download an aerial map, a garden description, contact details and a photograph, and print them for easy reference.

Providing Festival information was the first extension of the very capable regional Internet Geographic Information System (GIS) to a wide range of data such as tourist attractions, events and accommodation.

The site has already proved hugely successful for accessing rates and property information, Taranaki Regional Council information on resource consents, land

management plans, hydrological data and information about underground services for the three councils. Interested viewers can call up information on individual properties by searching by place name, address, road name, property assessment number and river or dairy number.

Legal descriptions, capital value, land value, rating details, aerial photographs, topographical information, rivers and streams, dairy inspection records, animal and plant pest programmes, riparian plans and wetlands are all accessible. Streets and roads can be located anywhere in the region. Aerial photographs and topographical maps of Egmont National Park, and information from sites that record rainfall, wind speeds, river levels, water quality, ground water and soil moisture are readily available. The system is user friendly and free. Its potential is impressive.

The site was co-operatively developed by the Taranaki Regional Council and the Stratford and South Taranaki district councils to provide free access to a broad

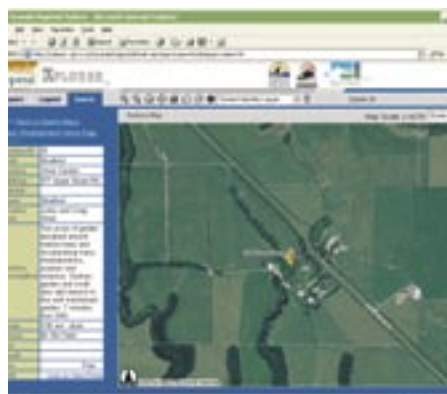
range of geographic data about the Taranaki region. It is hoped that as the site grows, it will become a rich source of information for people both within and outside the region who are keen to find out about the attractions and opportunities that Taranaki provides.

Xplorer wins award

Taranaki Regional Xplorer received a prestigious Excellence in Innovation award at this year's Association of Local Government Information Management conference. The web site that now readily provides free community information that formerly had to be requested, was described by the judges as well defined, well controlled, meeting objectives and "something a little out of the ordinary".



Taranaki Regional Xplorer links to the Taranaki Rhododendron and Garden Festival web site.



The viewer accesses an aerial map of the Oliver Garden in Stratford to assist in locating the garden.



Xplorer provides a large photograph of the garden.

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From the Chair

With the October local body elections now behind us, the Council is looking forward to another interesting and productive term in which we can further enhance the Taranaki environment for the betterment of our communities.



There are already signs that there will be plenty of issues to deal with, both on national and regional levels. These issues include developing further plans to meet our new biodiversity responsibilities, reviewing the Regional Policy Statement, liaising with other key organisations to develop a regional walkways strategy, further implementing the Regional Action Plan for the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord, stepping up the war on animal pests including predators, reviewing the regional passenger transport strategy and advancing our waste management programmes.

As well, there is a host of legislation from Wellington to be dealt with including the Foreshore and Seabed Bill, marine reserves and oceans policies, an Aquaculture Bill and a New Zealand Coastal Policy Statement.

Closer to home, the development and enhancement of the two regional gardens Tupare and Hollard Gardens have high priority, as does lobbying for further improvements to State Highway 3 from Waitara to Te Kuiti.

In addition to all this are the routine responsibilities that include the processing and monitoring of thousands of consents.

The Taranaki Regional Council has an experienced and progressive council and excellent staff under the skilled management of Basil Chamberlain. We look forward to rolling up our sleeves and tackling the challenges ahead.

David Walter - CHAIRMAN

Minister launches new civil defence plan

The Minister of Civil Defence George Hawkins has congratulated the region on its new Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan launched in November describing it as a “quality” result leading similar planning throughout the country. The Minister and Director of Civil Defence John Norton attended the launch.



“The Taranaki Region is subject to many hazards and risks because of its geographical and geological setting, and as a region of energy supply, Taranaki has had many past experiences of civil defence emergencies, demonstrating the need for an effective planning process ... much innovative thinking in your plan has been shared amongst the other Group planners across the CDEM sector, improving the general standard of planning in New Zealand,” he said.

At the launch of the Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan were from left CDEM Group Chairman Roger Maxwell, Stratford District Council Mayor Brian Jeffares, South Taranaki District Council Mayor Mary Bourke, Minister of Civil Defence George Hawkins and New Plymouth District Council Mayor Peter Tennent.

The Plan that was finalised after a round of public consultation that considered nine submissions is a comprehensive single civil defence plan for Taranaki, designed to ensure that the region is self reliant and united in its risk management approach to hazards. The Plan follows the introduction of new measures under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002.

The Plan was finalised by a Civil Defence Emergency Management Group comprising the region’s mayors Mary Bourke (South Taranaki District Council), Brian Jeffares (Stratford District Council) and Peter Tennent (New Plymouth District Council) and chaired by Taranaki Regional Councillor Roger Maxwell, along with a Co-ordinating Executive Group of the councils’ chief executives, and emergency specialists.

Election results

At the recent local body elections, eight Taranaki Regional Councillors were returned (three unopposed) and two new councillors, Bruce Cudby and Moira Irving, were elected.

The new Council is:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Chairman, David Walter, Stratford | Deputy Chairman, Roger Maxwell, North Taranaki |
| Tom Cloke, New Plymouth | Bruce Cudby, South Taranaki |
| Moira Irving, New Plymouth | David Lean, New Plymouth |
| Donald McIntyre, North Taranaki | David MacLeod, South Taranaki |
| Barry Marsh, New Plymouth | Neil Walker, South Taranaki |

Councillors elected to committee chairs are Neil Walker, Policy and Planning, Roger Maxwell, Civil Defence Emergency Management, David Lean, Consents and Regulatory, Roger Maxwell, Regional Land Transport and David Walter, Executive.

The results of a referendum for Māori representation were 12% in favour and 88% against. The referendum sought guidance from the regional community for the Council’s next representation review that is required before 2006.

Stocking rate experiment shows little difference

A three-year soil experiment on rotational grazing in Taranaki at two stocking rates has turned up little difference in results.

Landcare Research scientist, Dr Graham Sparling, carried out the part Council-funded experiment on the Waimate West demonstration farm grazing 3.8 Jersey cows per hectare on one sub-farm and 4.9 Jersey cows on another. The lower stocking rate herd was fed with minimal off-farm supplementary feed, and the higher stocking rate herd was given enough supplementary feed to match the per animal intake of the other herd.

There were no significant differences in physical and chemical characteristics between the two treatments. The soil for both had high organic matter content and

organic fertility and the soil condition for both improved slightly during the trial.

While the risk of compaction and pugging was greater under higher stocking rates, they did not cause it, the report concludes. Key factors in their avoidance were through not grazing susceptible and saturated fields, moving stock once grazing was complete and the use of feed pads. Farm management had improved soil quality for both stocking regimes and highly stocked soils were in as good a quality as soils stocked at a lower rate.

At the end of the experiment, Dr Sparling concluded, "the higher stocking rate and management has had no adverse effect on soil quality of Egmont Brown loam."



Council-supported trials into a range of pasture management and stocking regimes at the Dexcel demonstration farm and Whareroa are continuing and will add to these results.

Council challenges intensive farming report

A new report on intensive farming in New Zealand that warns that the country's export marketing, tourism and clean, green image are under threat if we do not better manage our environment's natural capital - rivers, lakes and aquifers, soils, biodiversity and atmosphere - has been challenged by the Council.

Growing for good: intensive farming, sustainability and New Zealand's environment was prepared by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, Dr J. Morgan Williams, following concerns about the impacts of intensive farming, particularly dairying.

The report states that the number of cows in dairying increased by 34% between 1994 and 2002, while the land area used for dairying grew by just 12%. In the same period, synthetic fertiliser used across all sectors grew by 21% while the use of urea

fertilisers increased by 160%. There was strong evidence that waterways and lakes were becoming nutrient enriched and degraded from animal faecal matter and eroded sediment as well as from nitrogen.

Significantly, the Commissioner's report is based on farming in Waikato, Hawke's Bay, Canterbury and Southland. There is some reference to riparian planting projects in some of those areas, but no mention of the Council's comprehensive riparian programme.

Council Chief Executive Basil Chamberlain said that while it was important to face up to the challenges ahead, it was also important to acknowledge the efforts of farmers and other groups who are achieving results rather than simply talking about it.

"The Taranaki Regional Council carries out extensive monitoring that was reported

in the 2003 State of the Environment Report. Overall environmental trends in Taranaki over the last ten to twenty years are pretty good. What sets this region apart is the quality of our environment and the actions we are taking."

"The Commissioner's report in reference to Taranaki is highly debatable in respect of its selectiveness and relevance of the analyses and in its conclusion," he said.

The report recommends that farmers in partnership with local and central governments redesign the vision of farming for the future, immediately stop farm pollution, manage fertilisers and clean up waterways, and advocates more investment for research into sustainable farming systems and integrated catchment management.

For the full report, visit www.pce.govt.nz.

RMA review brings good results

The recently announced proposals by central government to improve the Resource Management Act (RMA) included nearly all the recommendations made by the local government working party.

It was a pleasing result for Council Chief Executive Basil Chamberlain who chaired the Local Government RMA Improvement Project Team and was later invited by the Associate Minister for the Environment,

David Benson Pope, to sit on his advisory reference group as well.

The Project Team focused on processes, suggesting improvements and changes to the law that would make it more efficient, timely and cost effective without diminishing the environmental outcomes. Its report recommended changes that addressed commonly held perceptions that: the national interest gets insufficient weight in local or regional decision

making; the Act is unbalanced in favour of the environment and at the expense of resources; decision making processes are too long and too costly; the Act provides too much opportunity for frivolous, vexatious or extortionate behaviour; the Act invites Māori to raise issues that cannot be resolved within the RMA context adding costs for little benefit and the key means of addressing many of the above issues takes too long and costs too much.

Planting marks riparian milestone

When Barry and Linda Whittington bought the neighbouring Stratford farm, they inherited a substantial area of riparian protection established by the former owner. Recognising the obvious benefits of the protection, they embarked on their own riparian programme.

They now manage an impressive 10.8 kilometres of stream bank protection on their large Beaconsfield Road dairy farm near Stratford and there is more to come. Their staged riparian plan includes a further 2.6 kilometres of banks on the Piakau Stream that they are fencing and planting.

Linda Whittington says that protecting the many riparian margins on the farm has been a big commitment but is now proving its worth.

“Comparing planted riverbank with unplanted riverbank, you can see that the results look really good at the end of the day. It is a big expense but we think it is worthwhile in the end,” she said.

Planting the 500,000th riparian plant from the council’s riparian plant supply scheme on the Whittington’s farm, therefore, was a fitting celebration of the region’s progress in protecting the banks and waters of its streams and rivers.

Council Chairman David Walter did the honours, adding one more native plant to the margin of the Kahouri Stream. He said that the commitment of farmers like the Whittingtons had over the past 10 years, contributed significantly to improving the water quality of the region.

“Farmers have developed an increasing interest in riparian management and have made a considerable investment in its implementation. The Council has responded with greater efficiency to provide support and advice. While the work is carried out in rural areas, in fact everyone benefits. Better quality water and reduced erosion upstream lead to healthier and more pleasant conditions all the way to the coast. The results are very satisfying,” he said.

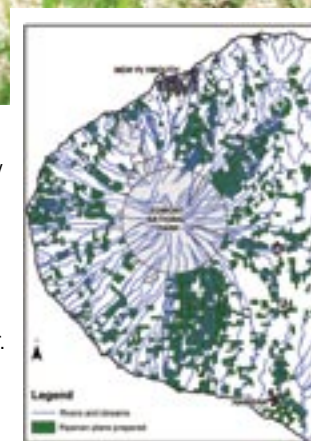
In the past financial year alone, Council officers prepared nearly three times as many riparian management plans for farmers as it had the year before. The 299 plans recommend a mix of retirement and re-vegetation of land along 1,544 kilometres of stream and riverbanks. It’s a significant increase on the figures for the 1999/2000 year when 62 plans were prepared for a total of 89 kilometres. Where in the past Council officers might prepare 15-20 plans a year, each of the three land management officers dedicated to preparing riparian management plans might expect to produce about 100 plans annually. In just over a decade, 942 riparian management plans have been prepared for a proposed 3,492 kilometres of protection.

These figures, while impressive, need to be put into context to really appreciate the importance of riparian management to Taranaki. An aerial photographic survey of 25 ring plain streams in 1995 estimated that around 40% of their total length from the Egmont National Park boundary to the coast had either exotic or native riparian vegetation. A study in 2000 estimated that approximately 8,000 kilometres of waterways pass through the ring plain, amounting to about 16,000 kilometres of riverbank. Putting the two estimates together, it appears that around 9,600 kilometres of riverbank in Taranaki require riparian vegetation – and that’s a lot of plants, fencing and hard work.



Council Chairman David Walter, plants the milestone tree assisted by farm workers Rodney Zehnder (left) and Shawn Van Delden.

The map shows the extent of riparian plans prepared for the Taranaki region by October this year.



The benefits of riparian management are numerous and are not confined to the land

where fencing and/or planting are carried out. Water quality in Taranaki can be dramatically improved by riparian planting that filters sediment from surface runoff. Swampy vegetation removes nutrients from the water and restricted stock access means that no animal dung or urine is discharged directly into the water. Water temperatures are reduced too as the shade provided by trees and shrubs can lower both the average temperatures and temperature fluctuations.

Further advantages come from the abilities of deep-rooted vegetation to lessen the threat of stream bank erosion and help keep banks stable. Planted areas regulate the amount of surface water flowing into streams during heavy rain, thereby reducing the severity of flooding. They can provide habitats for wildlife, shelter for stock, timber resources and help improve farm management. And, of course, they look good.

With all those benefits, it is hardly surprising that farmers are becoming increasingly keen to get riparian management under way, and that the Council is there to support them with free advice. The Council is in the business of promoting sustainable management of the region’s natural and physical resources.

Farmers make huge investment in banks

The protection and planting of Taranaki's margins add up to one of the biggest co-operative green projects in New Zealand. As there are around 300 streams radiating from Mt Taranaki and wending their way toward the coast, the region has the largest number of waterways in dairying country that require riparian management and protection under riparian management plans.

While the riparian plans are provided by the Council at no cost to the farmers, the fencing and planting costs are the farmers' own, adding up to a significant investment on the part of the farming community. The single greatest cost is fencing. In 2000 it was estimated that approximately 9,600 kilometres of stream banks were yet to be fenced in the region – a figure that equates

to considerable dollars worth of posts and wire. To further assist farmers, the Council has operated a riparian plant scheme since 1996. Each year, nurseries tender to supply native plants and the Council buys them in bulk, passing them on to the landowners in winter at cost. Where possible the plants are eco-sourced – grown from Taranaki seed so that the programme not only protects streams and livelihoods but preserves biodiversity as well.

The native riparian plants are chosen for each plan according to their suitability for planting in three different climatic conditions – coastal, mid ring plain and upper ring plain and are matched to appropriate riparian zones. In the 2004 planting season, more than 148,000 riparian plants were grown by 14 nurseries

and supplied to 394 riparian management plan holders.

Landowners are in the best position to improve the condition of the streams that flow through their farms. While they may not be able to achieve pristine water quality on their own, because they are constrained by what happens further upstream, their fencing, planting, maintenance and animal and plant pest control activities significantly help to improve water quality and to enhance the environment for everyone.

Increasingly, individual catchments are now being targeted for riparian management so that the cumulative effects of better water quality can be as widespread as possible.



A well planted riparian margin greatly enhances the environment for everyone.



The Council's riparian plant scheme provides plants to farmers at cost.

GIS aids planning

The Council's customised geographic information systems application has revolutionised the preparation and presentation of riparian plans by Council officers, and sped up the whole planning process.

Each plan includes a laminated, colour, aerial photograph of the property with the proposed works plotted. On the reverse side of the photograph are tables used to calculate costs of fencing, planting, labour and spraying, an implementation schedule and recommended plant lists. Additional information is provided in appropriate brochures.

In future the GIS system will enable Council officers to track progress on the implementation of the various plans – many of which are carried out in stages – by adding annual field monitoring information to the database.

Riparian management plans are only one in a suite of four property plans provided at no cost to farmers through the

Council's Sustainable Land Management Programme.

Conservation plans deal with individual, site-specific problems – like gully stabilisation or advice on shelter belts and sand drift control – that do not require long-term input and planning activity. Agroforestry plans are primarily for hill country properties and computer model the physical and financial effects on a property from sustained planting to felling. Comprehensive farm plans look at all facets of eastern hill country properties' operations to protect soil and water resources while maximising production.

If you are interested in ensuring sustainable management of your farm, contact the Council and let the officers know. A land management officer will visit your farm, view the property and discuss your requirements with you, and then draw up a draft plan, at no cost, that you can both fine-tune to meet your requirements.

Seminar encourages moves beyond compliance

When David Stones, Director of the Mill Bars and Restaurant, first introduced measures to make environmental savings and minimise waste, his staff were a little “ho hum” about the additional chores. Now they are enthusiastic about what they can achieve. Everyone has a little bit of green in them, he believes, they just need to see the results.

Once the Mill staff realised that the leaky tap that no one had got round to fixing was wasting around 100 litres of hot water every 24 hours, they were hooked. The business is now saving on gas and electricity, recycling cardboard, glass and food scraps and saving \$3-5,000 a year as a result.

The hospitality industry, he said, used huge amounts of power and generated enormous waste. It was important that other members of the Hotel Association realised how much could be done to benefit the environment.

David Stones was a guest speaker at the Council's recent “Beyond Compliance” seminar that urged about 80 people to take responsibility for their own work environment beyond their formal obligations.

Ron Coleman, Taranaki Region Manager of Trustpower Generation, also spoke,

outlining environmental responsibilities and explaining how his company now reports to shareholders on environmental compliance as well as financial progress. Consents, he said, “are a licence to operate – no consents, no generation opportunities.”

To ensure continued consent condition compliance, his company used a number of techniques that ranged from the use of sophisticated computer-based technologies to simply placing special oil-absorbent mats and containers under leaking machinery, he said. Each technique had its own significant part to play. Trustpower was very focused on protecting and sustaining the environment within which it operated.

The seminar provided an opportunity to launch the Council's *Environmental Management Guide* that outlines ways for businesses and industry to improve environmental performance and prevent pollution. The Guide discusses drainage; storage; spills; air; waste minimisation and cleaner production and soil contamination and includes checklists, an action plan template and advice on spills and incidents.

Copies of the Guide have been sent to all



Free copies of the *Environmental Management Guide* are available from the Council

businesses with compliance monitoring programmes and Council officers continue to distribute them where appropriate.

If you would like a free copy of the *Environmental Management Guide* contact the Council office or visit www.trc.govt.nz.

New projects modify hydro scheme

Three new electricity generation projects that have earned Trustpower carbon credits from the Ministry for the Environment will enhance the existing hydro-electricity scheme in Taranaki.

Trustpower's Community Relations Manager Graeme Purches said that the projects were selected as 'Kyoto' projects last year and awarded the carbon credits because they more efficiently use existing resources, thereby reducing the need for emission of greenhouse gases into the environment.

A maintenance project presently under construction involves hydraulic improvement to the intake at the Mangorei scheme that will allow more water into Lake Mangamahoe, generate more electricity and improve efficiency.

In an associated project likely to begin later this summer, a small dam and generator

will be installed in a diversion race that runs from the Manganui River into Lake Rataipiko. The effect of the modification is that the water will be used twice, generating more electricity more efficiently with the same resource.

Trustpower is currently working through the resource consent process with the Council for the third project that will install some small pumps into the Mangaotea Stream, a tributary of the Manganui River. Graeme Purches said the projects were designed to meet the growing demand for electricity without having to build new infrastructure.

Annual report moves out

In a new move to ensure that as many people as possible could read the annual report, the Council has widely distributed a report summary throughout the region.

Thirty-eight thousand copies of a special issue of *Recount* outlining the Council's achievements during the 2003/2004 year were recently inserted into the *Taranaki Daily News*. A further 2,000 were distributed via mail or deposited at district libraries and service centres.

If you missed out and would like a summary or a copy of the full report, call the Council offices and request a copy, phone 0-6-765 7127, fax 0-6-765 5097 or email info@trc.govt.nz or visit www.trc.govt.nz.

Roads clean up

Judging by the lack of complaints recently about stock truck effluent on Taranaki's roads, it appears that the four disposal facilities in the region have won universal approval.

Over the last year, there have been no complaints to the Taranaki Regional Council, district councils or the roading authorities in Taranaki about stock truck effluent on the roads – a far cry from the situation a few years ago.

Council Chairman David Walter said that transport operators and farmers were to be congratulated for their role in keeping stock effluent off the roads.

“Their efforts, have certainly been noted by the regional community. This is a huge improvement,” he said.

The facilities that collect the effluent for appropriate treatment were established at the Stratford sale-yards in 2002, near Waverley in 2003 and at Ahititi and the Inglewood sale-yards this year. Collectively they dispose of more than two million litres of effluent each year from an estimated 3,600 truck and trailer units.

In the last year, 880,000 litres of effluent were discharged at the Waverley facility alone, amounting to an average weekly discharge of 30 truck and trailer units, almost doubling the initial estimates and



Councillor and Regional Manager of the Road Transport Association, Tom Cloke, inspects the Ahititi stock truck effluent facility.

representing a 40 per cent increase on the previous year.

The result is cleaner and safer roads.

David Walter said that undoubtedly the introduction of disposal facilities had brought major benefits for both the environment and the safety of road users in Taranaki. It was important now to ensure that they were fully and effectively utilised.

“These initial results are very encouraging, now we must continue to promote the use of these facilities and emphasise the need to stand stock before they are transported, in order to ensure that these benefits are maintained,” he said.

Taranaki students attend youth forum

Three young Taranaki people will join the second national forum of its type this month to tackle the issue of New Zealand's environmental future.

Gemma Cartwright, Hawera High School, and Laura Duynhoven and Simon Vale both from Inglewood High School will join around 50 young delegates at the newly-named Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum in Wellington. The three students won the trip in an environmental essay competition organised by the Taranaki Regional Council.

Council Chairman David Walter congratulated the winners on their interest in the future of Taranaki's environment.

“These young people show real understanding of the environmental issues and challenges that face our community. Their commitment is very encouraging for the sustainable management of our natural resources,” David Walter said.

Other finalists Greg Severinsen, New Plymouth Boys' High School and Danielle Lowe, New Plymouth Girls' High School were awarded educational resources.

The National Youth Environment Forum is supported by the Sir Peter Blake Trust and the Ministry for the Environment. Delegates will be hosted at a Parliamentary function and their travel and accommodation expenses met by the Minister for the Environment Marian Hobbs.



Gemma Cartwright



Laura Duynhoven



Simon Vale

Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

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Facsimile: 0-6-765 5097
Email: info@trc.govt.nz
Website: www.trc.govt.nz

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

REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

New Plymouth Constituency:

Tom Cloke 0-6-753 5586
Moira Irving 0-6-753 3063
David Lean 0-6-753 3325
Barry Marsh 0-6-758 2252

North Taranaki Constituency:

Roger Maxwell 0-6-752 3622
Donald McIntyre 0-6-762 4701

South Taranaki Constituency:

Bruce Cudby 0-6-278 5573
David MacLeod 0-6-278 5577
Neil Walker 0-6-278 7541

Stratford Constituency:

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 February, 10.30 am,
Consents and Regulatory Committee

Thursday 3 February, 10.30 am,
Policy and Planning Committee

Monday 14 February, 10.00 am,
Executive Committee

Wednesday 23 February, 10.30 am,
Ordinary Meeting

Tuesday 15 March, 10.30 am,
Civil Defence Emergency Management
Group

Wednesday 16 March, 10.30 am,
Consents and Regulatory Committee

Thursday 17 March, 10.30 am,
Policy and Planning Committee

ISSN No 1171-1140

Gardens plans up for comment

Public consultation over the next few months will provide a glimpse of proposed developments at Tupare, Hollard Gardens and Pukeiti, and a chance to make further comments.

This is the most recent stage of the regional gardens' project that has involved comprehensive research and discussion about their development and management at both regional and national levels. Interested general community members and gardening, environmental planning and tourism specialists have all had their say on the gardens' future.

The public consultation will outline the plans that are intended to revitalise the gardens, attracting a wider audience beyond the customary garden enthusiasts and making efficient use of existing resources.

The detailed asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard Gardens were revealed to councillors at a recent meeting, while similar plans for Pukeiti, prepared by the same technical advisory group, were presented to the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.

The plans aim to reinvigorate all three gardens, restoring their heritage values and introducing appropriate new facilities. They highlight the individual values and characters of each of the three gardens and draw on their combined strengths.

Plans for Tupare include the restoration of the Chapman-Taylor designed house and the gardens. At Hollard Gardens the plans propose a new visitors' pavilion, protection and documentation of the comprehensive plant collection, and potential education facilities. Pukeiti, the plans propose, could be developed as a significant visitor centre with accommodation and food, an



The restoration of the house and garden at Tupare is part of the proposed regional gardens' plan.

historic tramway, aerial walkway and associated retail. Stories of the establishment of all three gardens are proposed for research and display.

Each of the three gardens is known nationally and overseas particularly among garden audiences, and both Pukeiti and Hollard Gardens have been awarded national Gardens of Significance ratings.

The Council received the asset management plans for Tupare and Hollard Gardens for inclusion in the 2005/2006 draft annual plan and noted the next round of public consultation.

Field day assesses bush

A system that enables observers to rank native forest and determine what is needed to best maintain and enhance it was revealed to an interested group of foresters and conservationists last month.

The farm forestry field day organised by the Council at Lake Rotokare demonstrated how close attention to details such as existing plant species, ground covers and evidence of pest animals could be transformed into an action plan for conservation.



Foresters and conservationists learn more about managing forest remnants.

The bush assessment kit used was developed by ecologist Helmut Janssen and is designed to help landowners care for and manage native forest remnants on private land. The first step is a bush vitality assessment – what to look for and how to interpret what you see in the bush. The second step includes guidance on how to improve bush health by assessing the resilience of the ecosystem and employing sustainable land management practices to reduce erosion.

Council focuses on indigenous biodiversity

One change brought by last year's Resource Management Amendment Act is the Council's increased and broadened responsibilities for maintaining indigenous biodiversity. Put simply, it means the Council must ensure that no changes to the environment are allowed to harm Taranaki's indigenous organisms that live in wetlands, rivers, lakes or the sea.

As Taranaki contains 530 named rivers and 717 wetlands, and has a 295-kilometre stretch of coastline, the indigenous biological population in the region is vast with many rare, endangered and uncommon native plant, fish, bird and animal species.

In order to meet its enhanced responsibilities, the Council has begun a review process to establish the extent of indigenous biodiversity and to design a management programme.

A working paper has kicked off a review to establish the extent of indigenous biodiversity and to design a management programme, and has received 10 submissions from local, regional and national groups. The paper is intended for inclusion in the Council's second *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki* and opportunities for public comment will be available through the first Statement's current review.

The Council's increased responsibilities build on work already undertaken that addresses significant areas related to indigenous biodiversity.