

## Taranaki makes good progress with Clean Streams Accord

Good progress in preparing farm plans means that more than half of Taranaki's dairy farms now have their own property plans, comfortably meeting the targets of the *Dairying and Clean Streams Accord*.

With 381 new plans for fencing and planting of stream banks prepared by Council staff during the 2004-2005 year, the *Regional Action Plan for Taranaki* is on target to have plans prepared for 90% of all dairy farms by 2010.

The Accord promotes sustainable dairy farming in New Zealand by reducing the impacts of dairying on the quality of streams, rivers, lakes, ground water and wetlands. The *Regional Action Plan for Taranaki*, prepared by the Fonterra Co-operative Group, Federated Farmers and the Council, and initiated in May 2004, adapts the Accord to local conditions and is one of many strategies and activities promoting good water quality in Taranaki.

Along with farm plans and stream crossings, the Action Plan deals with the issues of dairy effluent discharge compliance and protection of wetlands.

### Riparian plans

The Council has been working with landowners to develop riparian plans since 1993 when its riparian management programme was set up. Plan preparation is free and is supported by a riparian plant scheme that provides plants to plan holders at cost. Following the tax law changes earlier this year, the Council is gathering information to encourage further riparian planting by demonstrating how farmers can maximise their tax benefits by carrying



Riparian fencing and planting, like this 5 year-old stand protecting the Tawhiti Stream, help meet the targets of the Accord.

out more than twelve month's worth of planting in one year.

Preparation of 1100 property plans has been completed covering a total of 6,894 kilometres of stream bank. Of this, 3,801 kilometres are now fenced (55%) and 2,672 kilometres are protected by planting (39%). The Action Plan target is to have 50% of the property plans implemented by 2010 and 90% by 2015. As implementation of the plans is still a significant task for many farmers, it is important that they make a start on fencing and planting to ensure their completion within the timeframe.

### Stream crossings

To assist farmers in protecting the region's

waterways, information is available outlining smart options for stock crossings, and clarifying resource consent requirements. (For a free copy contact the Council or visit [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz)). In order to reduce time and costs and to encourage farmers to meet the Action Plan targets, a single, resource consent can now apply to a number of bridges and/or culverts in the same catchment. A Council supported review by the Taranaki Rural Sustainability Group of culvert and bridge design also is under way.

A survey of 750 property plans shows that 96% of all regular stream crossings are adequately bridged or culverted. The Taranaki targets are to have 50% of all regular crossing points bridged or culverted

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## From the Chair

This edition of *Recount* features the new draft *Regional Land Transport Strategy for Taranaki*.

This Strategy is a far heftier document than its predecessors. It includes not only a comprehensive study of the region's roading network, rail and passenger transport, and walking and cycling networks, but also a draft regional passenger transport plan. Transport in some way affects us all.



This is the fifth strategy of its kind to be prepared for the region, but the first under the Land Transport Management Act 2003 that radically modified the contents and structure required. The result, developed by Taranaki's Regional Land Transport Committee, is a carefully crafted draft that takes into account the reliability, security and efficiency of our roads, rail infrastructure and land transport networks, and examines how they can help the future development of the region.

The Strategy also looks at safety issues, for example road improvements and driver education, and how we can improve access and mobility, particularly for those for whom transport can be a challenge. Issues of promoting public health and environmental sustainability are addressed as well.

The *Regional Passenger Transport Plan for Taranaki* included in the Strategy deals with the growing, national need to consider increasing passenger transport services – with an eye to specific Taranaki needs. In many cases, the Plan allows market demands to continue determining passenger services. In some other situations, targeted assistance for public passenger services is proposed where commercial opportunities are lacking.

The Strategy provides not only a well-researched foundation for developments in land transport in the region but also, the invaluable groundwork that is necessary for any transport funding applications. Before the draft was drawn up, many individuals, groups and communities interested in transportation planning and operations were asked for their views and ideas. Comment was sought also from the three district councils – New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki. Submissions on the draft have now closed and the Strategy is being finalised.

This is a very important document for our region, as it will play a vital part in decision making and the application of funding. Its vision will ensure that 'Taranaki's transport system contributes to a prosperous, connected, healthy and vibrant community which meets the needs of residents, businesses and visitors, now and in the future'.

David Walter - CHAIRMAN

## Exercise Taniwha



Waitara 'evacuees' register at the Owae Marae Emergency Welfare Centre as part of a four-day emergency exercise last month. Exercise Taniwha was the first to test the new Civil Defence Emergency Management Group response system since its adoption earlier in the year. The exercise was based on a weather event that brought severe flooding to the region, particularly in the Waitara and Waitotara Rivers. More than 180 workers and 150 householders were involved.

## Taranaki makes good progress with Clean Streams Accord (cont)

by 2007 and 90% by 2015. A farm survey records that 87% of all properties already have adequate bridges or culverts on all their stream crossings, and that the average number of existing crossings per property surveyed is 4.5. The largest number of additional crossings required on a property is 15.

### Effluent discharge

The Council, through the *Taranaki Regional Fresh Water Plan*, provides advice and information for all types of dairy effluent treatment and disposal systems and annually inspects systems for resource consent compliance. Almost all (99.9%) of dairy farms in Taranaki now have a discharge consent. The initial target under the Action Plan was 100% of dairy farms with compliant consents by 2004.

### Wetlands

The Council maintains a database of regionally significant wetlands, visits these sites and offers advice on their protection and identifies new sites when preparing and monitoring property plans. At present, 64% of regionally significant wetlands are fenced and protected. The Action Plan targets are for 60% to be fenced by 2005 and 90% by 2010.

### Nutrient management

The Action Plan's target is for Fonterra to ensure that 100% of the region's dairy farms have in place systems to manage nutrient inputs and outputs by 2007. At present, 22% of Taranaki dairy farms have a nutrient budget in place (the national average is 19%). The responsibility for sound nutrient management belongs to individual farmers who can tap in to advice from fertiliser companies, or adopt the Fert Research code of practice for fertiliser use and the Fertmark quality assurance programme. Despite significant financial incentives for efficient fertiliser use, it appears that more support and guidance is needed from both Fonterra and the fertiliser companies if Taranaki farmers are to meet the targets of the Accord.

# Port faces *Undaria* challenge

A Port Taranaki trial to combat *Undaria pinnatifida* has recorded success in controlling the invasive seaweed, but has highlighted the enormous challenges posed for its eradication.

The Council trial began in August with the support of Biosecurity New Zealand to test the effectiveness of wrapping piles in black, durable plastic, following the March discovery that *Undaria* was growing in the eastern part of the port. In November, the piles had no living *Undaria* attached. Adjacent plastic mooring collars and ropes in the marina and on boats that could not be wrapped, however, had flourishing colonies of the seaweed.

The new infestations were cleared by Council and DOC divers.

*Undaria* is a fast growing seaweed species that produces millions of spores, threatens native seaweeds and is spreading rapidly throughout New Zealand. As it can foul ship hulls, ropes and buoys, it can be introduced easily by infected vessels entering new waters.

While plastic wrapping has proved to be a cost-effective method of *Undaria* control, it remains limited in its application to all affected surfaces. Ongoing work needs to be undertaken to ensure that the seaweed is kept under control, if not eradicated,



Invasive seaweed *Undaria* latches on to a yacht hull in Port Taranaki.

and does not spread to other parts of Port Taranaki.

## Didymo survey clear

A recent survey of Taranaki rivers following the discovery of invasive *Didymosphenia geminata* in Southland, and later Otago rivers revealed a local clean bill of health.

The survey was part of a national investigation of 400 South Island and 160 North Island sites and was initiated by Biosecurity New Zealand. A team from NIWA, Taranaki Fish and Game and Council officers took samples from 12 sites and sent them to NIWA in Christchurch for analysis. The Taranaki results were clear.

Although the sampling for the Didymo alga (or 'rock snot' as it is commonly known) was carried out as a special project, the sites tested are part of the



Taranaki rivers show no signs of the Didymo alga found in the South Island.

Council's ongoing and regular state of the environment monitoring programmes.

Any traces of Didymo in Taranaki are unlikely to go unnoticed for long. It would be difficult to overlook any of the dense colonies or algal blooms that are formed

in rivers and in its dormant state, it would be observed microscopically in the regular samples taken throughout the region by Council officers.

Didymo is native to cool, temperate areas of the Northern Hemisphere including northern forests and alpine regions of Europe, Asia and parts of North America. The Southland sighting was the first ever in the Southern Hemisphere. There are no known methods for control or eradication in rivers. Rigorous cleaning of river fishing and boating gear to stop it spreading to new catchments is advised by Biosecurity New Zealand.

For further information visit [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo).

## Compliance reporting complex and thorough

Annual reporting of 201 compliance monitoring programmes for major consent holders includes diverse and rigorous inspections, samples and surveys as illustrated by these two 2004-2005 year reports.

### Hongihongi and Herekawe Streams

The Hongihongi Stream discharges at the western end of Ngamotu Beach in New Plymouth and receives consented discharges from eight companies on Centennial Drive, Ngamotu Road and Breakwater Road. The neighbouring Herekawe Stream discharges to the middle of Back Beach and receives consented discharges from Dow Agro Sciences

and the Omata Tank Farm, including stormwater discharges from Shell Todd Oil Services and Methanex Waitara Valley Ltd. The Council carried out six inspections of the Hongihongi catchment and three inspections of the Herekawe catchment, two sets of water samples were collected for physicochemical analysis, and two biological surveys made of receiving waters in the Herekawe Stream. The industries monitored demonstrated a high level of environmental performance and compliance with their resource consents.

### New Plymouth Power Station

Contact Energy's thermal power station at Port Taranaki holds eight resource

consents with 73 conditions allowing it to discharge cooling water, wastewater and stormwater into the sea, and to discharge emissions into the air. The Council's monitoring included six site inspections, seven air emission inspections, two marine ecological surveys surrounding the cooling water outfall, review of operational data and sulphur dioxide analyses. During the year, the station was trialling oil burning as a replacement for natural gas. The Company demonstrated a high level of environmental performance and compliance with resource consents over the year under review.

# Regional Land Transport Strat

The recently released draft Strategy outlines the proposed way forward for Taranaki's land transport system over the next 10-20 years. It also provides the detailed information required for funding applications by clarifying what is most important to the region.

The information that follows is a brief summary of the transportation issues identified in the very comprehensive draft Strategy. The full document is available on the Council's web site [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz); on request from [publications@trc.govt.nz](mailto:publications@trc.govt.nz); at the Council offices in Stratford, at district council libraries and service centres; or by contacting the Council offices on 06 765 7127.

The Council's Regional Land Transport Committee will consider submissions on the draft Strategy in early 2006, and will make recommendations to the full Council. The Council will then make its final decisions on the Strategy and the Passenger Transport Plan, so that the important task of implementation can begin.

## TARANAKI TRANSPORT FACTS

The significance of regional land transport planning in Taranaki is underpinned by some interesting statistics recorded in the draft Strategy including:

- within the 723,610 hectares of the Taranaki region, there are 3853 kilometres of roads of which 3131 kilometres are sealed
- our road network is made up of 386 kilometres (10%) of state highways and 3465 kilometres (90%) of local roads of which, 2992 kilometres (86%) are rural local roads
- Stratford has 595.9 kilometres of rural, urban and special purpose local roads; South Taranaki has 1612.0 kilometres and New Plymouth has 1258.7 kilometres
- Taranaki has 158 bridges on state highways (including one single-lane bridge at the Stratford cemetery on SH43) and 668 bridges on local roads, of which 437 are single lane
- bridges occur approximately every six kilometres on our roads
- Taranaki records the fifth highest combined vehicle kilometres travelled and

net tonne kilometres travelled by heavy vehicles in the country, figures attributed to high demand here from forestry and dairying activities

- the 2001 census recorded 38,502 motor vehicles for private use in Taranaki
- in Taranaki 44.3% of households have one motor vehicle compared with the national average of 40.9%; the number of households with no access to a private motor vehicle 10.3% is similar to the national average; 45.4% of us own two or more vehicles compared with 49.1% nationally
- last year, 15 people lost their lives while driving in Taranaki, and 381 (297 minor and 84 serious) injury crashes were reported. The social cost of crashes in the region in 2004 is estimated to be \$112 million
- last year's road safety issues for Taranaki were identified as younger road users; intersections; speed and alcohol. By comparison, national road safety issues for the same time were speed, alcohol, failure to give way and restraints.

## Route security and reliability

One slip in the Awakino Gorge and we are instantly reminded of the importance of security and reliability of roads in our region.

Unlike other regions with their more accommodating topographical natures, Taranaki relies on only three major state highway routes for access – State Highways 3 (both north and south) and 43. If a highway is closed, there is no easy way of getting essential supplies in or out, and the economic prosperity and well-being of our people and communities are threatened. Specialised medical care, emergency response, trade movements, arts, culture and entertainment, and interaction with neighbouring communities are all dependent on our ability to transport goods and people to, from and within the region efficiently and safely.

To ensure route security and reliability,



the following actions are proposed or are already under way:

- a strategic roading hierarchy that identifies the function of key roads in the region as well as strategic linkages with agriculture, industry, forestry, tourism, the port and the airport

- continued advocacy for increased national funding of land transport projects/activities on State Highway 3 (north and south)
- continued support of the State Highway 3 Working Party to improve the route between New Plymouth and Pio Pio
- district council land transport programmes and projects that promote route security and reliability
- Transit NZ's 10-year state highway forecast to implement construction and maintenance projects and ONTRACK's (Toll NZ) 10-year development plan to identify projects, both recognising the importance of route security and reliability for Taranaki.

# Strategy looks at the big picture

## Economic development

The key economic growth areas in Taranaki – agriculture, forestry, oil and gas, engineering and tourism – rely heavily on efficient land transport. Sustainable transport = sustainable business.

Suggested improvements in the transportation network (including considerations of air and sea linkages), can initiate a raft of benefits including reduction in travel delays and improved travel time reliability, reduction in

congestion, effective land use policies and increased energy efficiency.

To achieve these benefits, Taranaki requires a more efficient rail network and improved rail connections with other regions, and the implementation of ONTRACK's development plan recognising the importance of Taranaki's economic development. District council land transport programmes and district plans that equate economic development

with land transport are vital, as is Transit NZ's state highway forecast recognising the importance of Taranaki's economic development.

Investigations into the best ways of recording forestry data and into the development of a scenic route through Taranaki will further boost the economy of the region, and are ongoing projects.

## Access and mobility

The diverse nature of Taranaki's population – low population numbers that are geographically dispersed, an increasingly ageing population and high levels of unemployment in certain areas – make it impossible to provide cost effective and viable public transport to the entire region. Instead, the priority is to provide flexible, convenient and reliable public transport to those in greatest need.

This includes a continuing commitment to the subsidised Total Mobility scheme of travel by taxi for people with disabilities, improved transport options for smaller rural communities, access and mobility considerations in new subdivisions and safe, dedicated networks for cyclists.

Issues of infrastructure and design of streets and kerbsides, accessibility of heavy vehicles to certain roads, legal right of way to roads and properties, and the desire of Taranaki people to access the coast are all highlighted in the Strategy.

Of particular interest to walkers and cyclists is the development of a *Regional Walkways and Cycleways Strategy for Taranaki* to be completed next year.

## Network efficiency

Network efficiency relies on effective design, engineering, operation and maintenance of a recognised hierarchy of roads that is accessible to everyone and works smoothly and efficiently.

Issues relevant to network efficiency include traffic management techniques, subdivision growth, lack of information on forestry and harvesting trends, tourism growth and increased heavy vehicle movements. Added to the mix are capacity issues in and around New Plymouth, rural/urban linkages, congestion and future growth pressures and the need for planning to address them. Road traffic to and from the airport and port is expected to increase with business growth. An increase in other road traffic in the New Plymouth District by 15-20% is anticipated over the next 10 years.

## Safety and personal security



Achieving a safer and more reliable transport system is critical if the high social and economic costs of fatalities and casualties from road crashes in the region are to be diminished. To this end, a Roadsafes Taranaki group has been established to invent, develop and promote road safety initiatives.

One specific group of issues faced by the region and addressed by the Strategy relates to engineering features of the road network – e.g. intersections, passing lanes, rail crossings, road alignment, signage and black spots. Another group includes related enforcement and education – e.g. driver training, road user education, driver licensing, drink driving and child restraints.

## Environmental sustainability

Land transport can have significant effects on the environment through its construction, maintenance and operational activities. Roads can alter natural drainage and flood channels, traffic noise can be intrusive and views can be ruined. Water and air quality; acceptable noise and vibration levels; natural features and landscapes; wildlife habitats and ecosystems; historic, heritage and cultural sites can all be influenced – and sometimes threatened by transport related activities.

While Taranaki does not experience the air quality problems of other more densely populated areas, our environment is vulnerable to other threats. Local issues identified by the Strategy include smoky vehicles and uncovered trucks; heavy vehicle noise and vibrations; stock effluent discharges; and polluting road runoff. Alternative fuels and energy efficiencies are promoted, and assessment of alternative transport and thoughtful signage design are encouraged.

The potential for hazardous substance spills by local industries and the impact of transport on local conservation areas, such as the Egmont National Park, are highlighted as areas of concern. The impacts of anticipated climate change and natural hazards on transport activities and infrastructure are noted also as threats to the region's environmental sustainability.

Actions to resist these threats include environmental monitoring of road transport, monitoring and potential extension of stock truck effluent sites, and the enforcement of the 10-second rule for smoky vehicles. District council construction and maintenance projects and district plans, Transit NZ's state highway projects, regional policy statements and plans that recognise the importance of environmental sustainability in the land transport network are all critical.

## Public health

The links between Taranaki's transport system and positive health outcomes are many and varied, and include the activities of agencies such as the Taranaki Health Board, district councils, Sport Taranaki, Transit NZ and the Council.

In order to increase public health in the region, the Strategy draws on these resources to:

- improve transport infrastructure for better access to employment, public health services, social services and facilities
- promote alternatives to driving and provide the infrastructure for walking and cycling
- reduce transport related emissions, noise and vibrations
- remove freight vehicles from developed or residential areas
- reduce traffic congestion
- encourage freight by rail rather than road
- improve overall road safety.

# Draft Regional Passenger Transport Plan for Taranaki

Included in the draft *Regional Land Transport Strategy for Taranaki* is the *Regional Passenger Transport Plan*. This Plan highlights the fact that passenger transport reduces traffic congestion, brings roading and parking benefits and increases levels of safety. It presents more options and more mobility for people otherwise disadvantaged, and encourages fewer vehicle emissions and greater environmental benefits. Added to that, there are more opportunities for social interaction and cheaper travel, and more means of getting to work, shops, schools and social events.

With these advantages in mind, the draft Plan proposes to begin in June next year, trials of a number of changes that include:

- a split of New Plymouth's Vogeltown-Merrilands bus service into two separate routes to better cater for the WITT campus and some of the newer residential areas
- an additional loop at the end of the Fitzroy bus route
- changes to bus fares that offer concessions to a wider range of transport



disadvantaged users and reward regular users. A free travel scheme for tertiary students where the tertiary institution shares costs, is also proposed

- increased bus service frequency within New Plymouth (2-3 extra services) and to Waitara (1 extra service).

In recognition that the South Taranaki district needs improved transport services between its towns, the Council will investigate, along with the South Taranaki

District Council, the establishment of a community transport system focused on the needs of Patea and based in Hawera; and a once-a-week bus service between Opunake and New Plymouth, and between Opunake and Hawera. The system will be trialled and will be assessed for further extension.

# Actions ensure good use of fertilisers

Active promotion of fertiliser spreading standards has earned Taranaki commercial ground spreaders the reputation of having the highest proportion of certified operators in the country.

Of the 22 companies in the region, 14 have completed Spreadmark certification and a further five are re-certifying for the programme that improves fertiliser placement and pasture productivity, and achieves better environmental outcomes. The quality assurance becomes more significant in light of research that shows uncertified operators varying in their fertiliser application to land between +160% and -40%, thereby greatly affecting its effectiveness and cost efficiency.

A research and communication project was launched in February to encourage best management practices for the increasing use of nitrogen fertiliser on hill country pastures. The Wise Use of N-Fertiliser on Hill Country Pastures project designed to run for three to four years, is sponsored by the Sustainable Farming Fund, Fert Research, Ballance Agri-nutrients and Ravensdown Fertiliser Co-operative. A Taranaki site on the sheep and beef, monitoring farm at Mangamingi is one of 14 farmer community groups investigating the use of N-fertiliser under different commercial conditions.

Best management practices include avoiding single dressing, high application rates by applying nitrogen at rates of 20 kg N/ha – 50 kg N/ha and reducing fertiliser application rates in wetter conditions. For further information on the project, visit the Council web site [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz).

## Project studies intensive dairying on soils

The latest report from an ongoing, Council supported research project shows that more intensive dairy management need not have adverse effects in the short term on soil, pasture and groundwater.

The project at the Dexcel Research Farm at Whareroa began in spring 2002. These results are from the second annual report from the research after three lactation cycles.

Five farming systems are conducted in parallel at stocking rates of three, four and five cows per hectare, plus one 'cut and carry' lot where farm effluent supplies nutrients removed through pasture mowing, and another lot left fallow with no additional nutrients.

Soil chemical and biological properties, macroporosity and surface roughness; pasture production, composition and mineral content and leachate were all examined, and found not to deteriorate at the higher stocking rates.

The results of the research project need to be considered along with other findings including the Council's own regularly reviewed and reported state of the environment monitoring programme. Practices associated with the intensification of dairying, such as the importation of supplementary feed, can have adverse effects upon the environment through changes in soil quality and structure and greater loss of nutrients from the farming system.

A free copy of the report is available from the Council offices.

## Feed pads brochure available

*Minimising muck, maximising money* is the title of a recently published brochure by Dexcel and is of particular interest to the Taranaki dairying community.

The brochure outlines design and management guidelines for dairy stand-off and feed pads. These purpose built, hard surface areas used to hold stock for wet periods or for feeding out supplements are increasingly being introduced to dairy farms. There are at least 190 feed pads already in Taranaki. A free copy of the brochure is available from the Council offices or by visiting [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz).

## Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

Address:	Private Bag 713 Stratford
Street Address:	47 Cloten Road Stratford
Telephone:	0-6-765 7127
Facsimile:	0-6-765 5097
Email:	<a href="mailto:info@trc.govt.nz">info@trc.govt.nz</a>
Web site:	<a href="http://www.trc.govt.nz">www.trc.govt.nz</a>

### AFTER HOURS CONTACT NUMBERS

After Hours Contact:	0-6-765 7127
Environmental Hotline:	0800 736 222
Civil Defence Emergency Management	0800 736 222

### 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
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### MEETING SCHEDULE:

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

**Wednesday 1 February**, 10.30 am,  
Consents and Regulatory Committee

**Thursday 2 February**, 10.30 am,  
Policy and Planning Committee

**Monday 13 February**, 9.00 am,  
Executive Committee

**Tuesday 14 February**, 10.30 am,  
Regional Land Transport Committee

**Wednesday 22 February**, 10.30 am,  
Ordinary Meeting

**Tuesday 21 March**, 10.30 am,  
Civil Defence Emergency  
Management Group.

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# South Taranaki coast under scrutiny

Local groups and environmental organisations have joined forces recently to fill a gap in recorded knowledge on the South Taranaki coast.

A community based project team of Nga Rauru, Ngati Ruanui, the Ohawe Boating Club, the Patea Boating Club, Manawatu-Wanganui Sea Fishing Club, Ministry of Fisheries, Horizons Regional Council, the Taranaki Regional Council and DOC was drawn together to provide information on the South Taranaki coast. DOC took the lead and provided the funding.

Anecdotal information was gathered from locals experienced in commercial and recreational fishing and diving, and familiar with the beaches and reefs. Workshops were held, surveys carried out



A report on the South Taranaki coast draws local and scientific knowledge together.

and a draft report compiled for comment.

A separate DOC project, supported by the Council, surveyed the North and South Traps (rocky, underwater structures). The Traps with their kelp forests and

abundant marine life are recognised in the Council's Regional Coastal Plan as having outstanding coastal value.

The project has gathered information on fish, kaimoana, marine mammals, sea birds and fauna both on the rocky shore and the sea floor, underlying geology and the physical climatic characteristics of the environment. The research explored what resources are important and how the use of them has changed over time. The results identify what people want for the area, and what additional research is required.

A final report and recommendations for further research that will contribute to a sustainable Taranaki are expected to be completed later this year.

## HSNO trial proves worthwhile

A pilot programme in which Council officers have trialled the practicalities of regional councils delivering inspections and compliance requirements under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act (HSNO) within the Resource Management Act (RMA) inspection programme, has proved a success.

The streamlining of multiple advisory, monitoring and enforcement roles under several pieces of legislation performed by a single agency provides real long-term

benefits for the region. Effective and professional delivery of all the functions simultaneously represents cost, resource and time advantages for all concerned. Taranaki industries have responded positively to the Council's involvement in HSNO, and to the pro-active and supportive approach adopted.

Staff development and training for the Government funded project has had beneficial spin-offs for the Inspectorate and Tech Services officers' RMA activities.

The general reaction from the regional community has strengthened the sense of partnership and positive attitude towards the Council, and regional industries have been encouraged to achieve compliance with HSNO requirements.

A proposed amendment to the HSNO Act will enable regional councils to be responsible for HSNO inspection and compliance work if they so choose.

## Xplorer site expands

Taranaki Regional Xplorer, the free public enquiry portal accessed through the Council's web site [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz), and through the Stratford and South Taranaki district councils' web sites, continues to grow. New reports are regularly added to established layers – such as new resource consents and inspections – and the latest versions of existing information replaces the old as the site is updated each month. Live regional data on rainfall, bathing water quality, river levels, temperatures and flows, or wind speed and direction data are available every day.

In recent months, Xplorer has gained several new layers of information, some yet to be developed and others with a raft of information already.

One of the most informative is the new

coastal marine inventory that records the locations of reports, investigations, impact assessments, publications, discussion papers and state of the environment monitoring reports relating to all areas of the Taranaki coast. There are more than 400 entries dating back to the 1960s drawn from oil company archives to the projects of research students. Each entry lists the title of the project, its author, the related geographical area and the information's completion status. A link is provided to the relevant report abstract and full copies of the report can be requested from the Council's offices.

Information recorded on the coastal marine inventory is presently being shared with a national Oceans Survey to be carried out during the next 15 years. The survey will cover the subsurface, seafloor,

water column and atmosphere throughout New Zealand's exclusive economic zone, and when complete, relevant information will be added to the resources of Xplorer.

Other new layers added to the site relate to schools (among the site's most regular users); the updated Taranaki Rhododendron and Garden Festival site; emergency management welfare centres; parent catchments (useful identification information for resource consent applications) and selected land use sites.

A planned aerial photography project for the region over summer will update rural and urban photographs and provide more high-resolution photographs for urban areas in Taranaki. The current photographic resources on the site are six years old.