

Recount



TARANAKI REGIONAL COUNCIL SUMMARY ANNUAL REPORT 2005/2006

October 2006 No. 57

Council records good bill of health

Once again, I am pleased to report that the Taranaki Regional Council has had a very active and successful year.

The range of activities we undertake is wide and far-reaching, and in some way affects most people who live in the region. In any year, it amounts to a great deal of work that is recorded in detail in our annual report.

This edition of *Recount* summarises our work programmes for the past 2005/2006 year and demonstrates that the Council is in very sound financial and operational health.

The Council works with the region's various groups and communities, farmers and industries to protect our natural environment and resources. We manage our natural resources making sure that any activities and developments in Taranaki are appropriate and sustainable, that is, in balance with the environment and the community both now and in the future.

To do this, we have a skilled team who look after Taranaki's land, coast, fresh water and air through resource consents,

environmental monitoring, education and initiatives. Rather than just react to situations, we keep a watchful eye out for potential hazards and we plan for emergencies. We provide support for initiatives that will help the region to prosper or will enhance the environment. We consult our community and we develop policies and plans on their behalf. We undertake research, set programmes and goals, regularly monitor the results and carry out reviews.

The Council is responsible for environmental management across the whole region and when appropriate, we work closely with the South Taranaki, Stratford and New Plymouth district councils in the best interests of the entire Taranaki community. You will notice in reading this document that much of what we do is done in partnership with other groups or individuals. The achievements outlined here demonstrate that our community, with the right support from the Council, can sustain serious programmes

of environmental enhancement on a scale not thought possible only 10 years ago and rarely seen elsewhere in New Zealand.

If you would like more detailed information about the Taranaki Regional Council and its activities, take a look at our informative web site www.trc.govt.nz, look for a copy of the *Taranaki Regional Council 2005/2006 Annual Report* in your local library, or request information through the Council's offices: phone 0-6-765 7127, fax 0-6-765 5097, email info@trc.govt.nz.

If you wish to comment on the Council's activities of the year, please contact us. We welcome your interest and your input.

David Walter
Taranaki Regional Council
Chairman



Key operational highlights for 2005/2006 include:

- processing of all 433 resource consents within statutory timeframes
- compliance monitoring of significant resource uses, which in general showed a very high level of compliance with consent and plan requirements
- response to 618 pollution incident notifications
- completion of an additional 303 riparian plans and supply of 151,000 streambank plants to provide water quality protection
- extension of self-help possum control programme to cover 213,000 ha on 3,481 properties
- progression of the review of the *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki*
- completion of an aquaculture constraints mapping exercise
- implementation of changes to the delivery of civil defence emergency management services
- completion of 6.3 kilometres of channel clearing in the Waitotara River
- adoption of asset management plans for the maintenance and enhancement of Tupare and Hollard Gardens
- development, in collaboration with the Stratford and South Taranaki district councils, of the Taranaki Regional Explorer geographic information system website.

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Community representation

Ten publicly elected Councillors have overall responsibility and accountability for the direction and control of the Council's functions. They are:

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

The full Council and main Council committees meet on a six-weekly cycle with other meetings held when necessary. The focus is on setting policy and strategy, and monitoring their implementation. It is the responsibility of the Council management to implement these policy and strategy decisions.



The Civil Defence Emergency Management Group is a joint committee established under the Civil Defence Emergency Management Act 2002. The Taranaki Regional Council is the administering authority of the Group and a member along with the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils.

Long-term Council Community Plan in action

The key planning focus for the Council during 2005/2006 was the preparation, audit and adoption of the 2006/2016 Long-term Council Community Plan.

At a glance:

- Adoption of the 2006/2016 Long-term Council Community Plan
- Report on community outcomes progress launched

This very comprehensive task brought together much of the Council's planning activities in preparing and adopting plans, strategies and policies across the whole range of Council activities and functions. Public consultation of this plan drew a high level of support for our programmes



New Plymouth MP Harry Duynhoven, Facilitation Group Chair Gloria Campbell, Associate Minister Of Local Government Nanaia Mahuta and Council Chairman David Walter launched the *Future Taranaki* report

and confirmed the Council's major policy directions for the next 10 years.

Related to the outcomes contained in the plan is the Council's membership of the Future Taranaki Facilitation Group that was set up in 2004 following our

community's identification of outcomes desirable for the wellbeing of Taranaki. Other members include senior managers of the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils, Taranaki District Health Board, Venture Taranaki, Ministry of Social Development and Te Puni Kokiri. The Council has led the work of this community representative group to identify indicators to measure progress, has collated available information on the indicators and prepared a report *Future Taranaki: progress report on community outcomes for Taranaki* which was launched in July 2006.

The report will form the basis of discussions on priorities for action to promote the economic, social, cultural or environmental wellbeing of the region. Overall, good progress has been made towards achieving the community outcomes.

Recreation culture and heritage responsibilities

The Taranaki Regional Council Empowering Act has enabled us to take a more active part in fostering recreation, culture and heritage in our region during recent years.

At a glance:

- Regional gardens' asset management plans adopted
- Implementation of plans under way

Asset management plans for the two Council-owned gardens Tupare and

Holland Gardens were adopted in September 2005 and their implementation has begun and will accelerate over the next two years. Significant tree surgery and maintenance work has already been carried out. An association with Pukeiti continues through stakeholder funding arrangements with the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust.

In 2001 the Council provided one-off funding and support for the development of Yarrow Stadium. During 2005/2006, the Council continued its 10-year rating to cover some of the costs for the development of the stadium which is



widely regarded as an excellent regional venue, and regularly attracts a wide range of audiences and events.

Consent processing numbers remain high

The Resource Management Act 1991 requires the Council to manage the coastal, air, freshwater and land resources of the region. Activities that might bring about some environmental change often require a resource consent that is then monitored for compliance by the Council. There were 433 consent applications processed during the year, a high level caused mainly by the buoyant regional economy particularly in farming and hydrocarbon exploration. They brought the total as at June 2006 to 4,206 current consents, 72% (3,045) of which are discharge consents dominated by 47% (1,965) farm dairy discharges.

Most applications (97%) were processed without public notification, avoiding or reducing the length of costly hearings but still involving some 1,235 parties. All applications, for the sixth year in a row, were fully processed within the statutory timeframes. There was only one hearing held during the year, the other resource consent applications that attracted submissions were resolved informally. In both the single Environment Court appeal and the two appeals held on applications, the Council's decisions were upheld by the Court.

Monitoring how well consent holders meet the conditions of their consents is important and comprehensive work in maintaining a healthy environment. The figures are



impressive. During the year, the Council implemented 207 individually tailored monitoring programmes associated with 235 different resource consent holders and 960 resource consents.

The programmes required 1,353 inspections, 1,480 water and soil samples, 205 air samples, 67 freshwater biological surveys, 30 shellfish surveys and 12 marine ecological surveys.

Inspections and sampling covered site management, abstraction and discharge quality, and receiving environment or impact

monitoring. Ninety-two per cent of consent holders achieved either a high or good level of performance and compliance.

At a glance:

- 433 consents processed (4,206 current consents)
- All consents processed within statutory timeframes
- 92% of consent holders with high or good performance and compliance

The Council continues to place a very high emphasis on responding to, and acting on, pollution complaints and ensuring that granted consents and plan requirements are complied with. During 2005/2006 143 abatement notices and 26 infringement

notices were issued and none was appealed. Three prosecutions will be resolved in the 2006/2007 year.

Monitoring shows good news in water quality

It is vital that the Council remains abreast of state of the environment trends – either good or bad – in order to take considered and timely action and to gauge how well programmes are working. To achieve this, we carry out an extensive state of the environment monitoring programme.

During 2005/2006, 25 separate programmes were completed, comprising 1,519 inspections, sampling runs and surveys at 325 monitoring sites. They involve the sampling of air, land, fresh water (including groundwater) and coastal water, and may include chemical, physical, bacterial or viral analysing,

soil analysing, flow gauging, electric fishing, biological surveying of freshwater or marine ecosystems, and the sampling and analysis of ambient air. The information taken over

many years, builds up a picture of trends and changes that helps the Council assess its own and resource users' performance in resource management.

In addition during the year, statistical trend analysis was carried out of both surface water quality and the biological health of our rivers and streams over a 10-year

period. The conclusion was that generally Taranaki has good to excellent fresh water quality, as good as or better than most equivalent waterways in New Zealand and substantially better quality than 25 years ago. However, a word of caution accompanies the

deterioration in nitrate levels, caused most likely by the increasing use of nitrogenous fertilisers and stocking rates in the region over the last few years.

At a glance:

- Comprehensive state of the environment monitoring
- Fresh water quality good to excellent



The fact that water quality is improving or being maintained despite the increasing pressures brought by an expanding dairy industry and other demands, is good news. The trends vindicate the considerable regional investment in improved wastewater treatment systems and their discharges, higher levels of compliance with resource consents, increased surveillance and monitoring, more stringent consent conditions and significant riparian planting and management.

Resource investigations add to knowledge bank

In 2005/2006, the Council continued its investment in investigations and research programmes often with other organisations in joint venture projects.



Studies undertaken by Dexcel and others and supported by the Council on the effects and consequences of high density stocking rates further confirmed there is no evidence that they have caused any sudden decline in soil structure. More efficient cycling of nutrients as stocking rates increase was evident.

At a glance:

- Studies of high stocking rates
- Staff trained for HSNO
- Ongoing waste minimisation activities

More than 20 Council staff were

trained and warranted under a pilot project delivering inspections and compliance under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act.

A number of activities, often with other agencies, continued the Council's ongoing studies and promotion of waste minimisation programmes working with publishing, public service, outdoor pursuits, education and farming sectors.

Investment reports

The Council has been aware for a number of years that the profitability of Port Taranaki Ltd would come under threat with the depletion of the Maui gas field and the subsequent effect on petrochemical trade through Port Taranaki. The drop-off in trade was fully felt over the last two financial years.

At a glance:

- Gas field decline effects felt
- New Port opportunities developed

During the past year, total trade volumes were 2.65 million tonnes, 23% less than those handled last year. Close attention to costs and to building new value streams resulted in an increase in total revenue, however, from \$27.96 million to \$29.77 million. Tax paid profit for the year was \$2.12 million, a 46% increase over 2005. This represented a 3.12% return on average shareholders' funds.

With strong shareholder support, the Port Taranaki Board is assertively addressing the future of the business and predicting a significant overall increase in trade volumes in 2006/2007. The port is in a good position to grow existing trades and to attract new volumes with its increased draft, infrastructural investments and new supply chain partners. Near to medium term opportunities include West Coast coal, offshore hydrocarbon exploration and development, container traffic and potential LNG imports.



During the year there were a number of related party transactions that occurred between Port Taranaki Ltd and the Council in the normal course of business.

Land management success



The Council's land management programme involves the provision of a range of farm plans to interested farmers on request and at no charge.

Nineteen comprehensive farm plans based on detailed land resource mapping and incorporating a total operations and business package were prepared during the year for hill country farmers. These plans brought another 11,737 ha of land under a comprehensive sustainable land management plan, bringing the total up to 144,000 ha of the region's hill country now under comprehensive or agroforestry plans. Ten more conservation plans increased the

total number of these plans to 208.

The development of riparian plans has been a major success story for both the Council and the farming community. During the year, 303 plans were prepared for farmers to plant and manage a further 1,462 kilometres of stream bank on their properties bringing the total to 56% of Taranaki farmland covering 9,236 kilometres of stream bank. Last year, we celebrated the planting of the 500,000th riparian plant provided under the Council's bulk plant purchasing scheme. Since then a further 157,565 plants have been provided for land and water protection equating to a huge planting effort by Taranaki landholders.

Work has continued on the region's

wetlands, and Council assistance for the Taranaki Tree Trust has included support for the Herekawe Stream Walkway project and the Te Wera Aboretum restoration.

At a glance:

- Further 11,737 ha of land under comprehensive sustainable land management plans
- Total 9,236 km of stream bank under riparian management plans
- Good progress on Dairying and Clean Streams Accord

This was the second year for the regional action plan to implement the national *Dairying and Clean Streams Accord in Taranaki*. The region has a substantial task ahead over the next decade but with the co-operative efforts of the Council, Fonterra,

Federated Farmers and the region's farmers the task is realistic and achievable. Good progress has already been made but requires a substantially higher level of application over the next few years. Crucial to the plan's success is continued proactive farmer leadership in the face of draconian regulation advocated by critics of farmers' environmental performance.

Flood control work and emergency management process

The Council has responsibility for river control and flood protection in the region, carrying out construction and maintenance of flood protection schemes as necessary. We also administer the Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group which is a joint committee of the four Taranaki local authorities.

During the past year, river control and flood protection work was carried out on three main rivers – Waitara, Waiwhakaiho and Waitotara – and smaller schemes in the region to manage the risks of damage and to keep potential costs to acceptable levels.

The key to the successful management of the Waitara flood protection scheme has been regular maintenance and monitoring of channel characteristics and flow conditions. Where deterioration or damage has occurred to groynes and bank protection, remedial work is carried out.

To address the most significant threat of flood damage to the Waitara township, significant bank lining work has been carried out during the year.

Ongoing flood protection maintenance work has been carried out at the Waiwhakaiho River and investigations begun into ways of improving flood protection.

Following consultation with the South Taranaki District Council, local land occupiers and the local community a staged programme



of channel clearance and maintenance works for the Waitotara River was adopted. With the co-operation of adjacent landowners, 4 kilometres of the river were initially cleared, followed by a further 2.3 kilometres downstream of the Waitotara township. Another 2.7

kilometres will be cleared as conditions permit. The benefits of this work were evident in a severe storm in July this year that brought heavy flows but flooding was largely avoided.

Both the *Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Plan* and the *Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency*

Management Business Plan got under way during the year. The CDEM Group also developed the *Pandemic Influenza Strategy for Taranaki* enabling the region to respond effectively to disruptions caused by such an event.

At a glance:

- Bank lining work continued on Waitara River
- Waitotara River clearing proves its worth
- CDEM plans and strategy devised

Transport issues

Following months of consultation and investigations, the Council heard public submissions, then adopted the *Regional Land Transport Strategy* and *Regional Passenger Transport Plan*. As a consequence, an 18-month trial of new look urban bus services began on 1 July 2006. At the same time, investigations into transport options in South Taranaki are being studied with the South Taranaki District Council.

To assist people who have few transport options, the Council supports subsidised concession fares on urban bus services in New



Plymouth, and taxi-based total mobility services in New Plymouth and Bell Block, Waitara, Inglewood, Stratford and Hawera. Almost 170,000 passenger trips were made with concession fares, and over 94,000 trips were made under the total mobility scheme for the disabled. Funding assistance for both schemes is provided by Land Transport New Zealand.

In ongoing work to ensure Taranaki's future in a variety of roading and funding issues, the Council continues to advocate on behalf of the region. Projects of significance in the past year include energetic promotion of the Bell Block Bypass project, and strong submissions to both Transit NZ and Land Transport New Zealand.

At a glance:

- Transport strategy and plan adopted
- Bus trial under way
- Regional advocacy for roading and funding issues
- Port safety record 100%

The Council also administers navigation bylaws for Port Taranaki through its harbourmasters and honorary enforcement officers. No navigation or safety incidents occurred in any of the 1,494 vessel movements recorded at the Port. Exercises and testing of oil spill response plans and equipment are carried out as a matter of course. The three minor marine spills within the Port area were responded to successfully and costs were recovered. A significant tallow spill required enforcement action and again costs incurred were recovered.

Possum fight continues

Another effective and satisfying partnership between the Council and farmers is the ongoing battle waged against possums.

Under the *Self-help Possum Control Programme*, areas are included only after at least 75% of the occupiers indicate their support for the scheme. Initial control is carried out on properties followed by ongoing maintenance by the occupiers to successfully keep possum numbers down.

During the year, the programme area was expanded by a further 10,300 ha bring the end of the year total to 3,481 properties comprising 213,000 ha. This represents over 90% of privately owned land on the ring plain.

At a glance:

- 90% of privately owned ring plain land now under *Self-help Possum Control Programme*
- Argentine ant added to pest animal list

Rigorous monitoring of the scheme area shows that property owners have worked exceptionally hard to keep possum numbers down. Only three notices of direction requiring possum control were issued last year, and no other

enforcement was needed. The low levels achieved are essential for protecting the region's biodiversity and for reducing the risk of Bovine TB.

While possums pose the greatest threat to Taranaki's economy and environment, they are not the only pest animals targeted. The wanted list includes rooks; rabbits; feral cats, deer, goats and pigs; magpies; mustelids (ferrets, stoats and weasels); hares and a newcomer – the Argentine ant. In response to the discovery of the invasive ant in the region, the Council undertook some control



Self-help Possum Control Programme progress

measures, launched a public education campaign and supplied pesticides to affected properties.

Pest plant vigilance increases

Control of pest plants is vital in Taranaki for the protection of both agriculture and the environment and the war is waged with vigilance. Their 'pest' status is identified by their potential threats to: economic wellbeing; already threatened species, indigenous plants or animals, natural ecosystems, ecological processes or biological diversity; soil resources or water; human health or enjoyment; and the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, waters, sites, wahi tapu and taonga.

At a glance:

- 207 notices of direction regarding pest plants complied with
- Biological control agents released

The major focus in the past year has been on ragwort control which, although much reduced compared to 10 years ago, remains a challenge for the region,

and on environmental pest plants. Two hundred and seven notices of direction were issued relating primarily to ragwort, gorse, wild ginger, old man's beard and pampas grass – an increase of almost 150% over the last year. All the notices were complied with.

The Council's ongoing biological control programme in the past year introduced control agents to four new sites – Scotch thistle gallfly pupae at three sites and gorse soft shoot moth larvae at one location.

Council officers made over 980 inspections of properties, 38 inspections of plant nurseries and retail outlets, and responded to 118 complaints regarding pest plants and 265 requests for information. They assisted also in alerting the public to changes or introduction of rules for some plants such as Chilean rhubarb and common and purple pampas.

For further information on pest plant management ring the Council offices or visit the web site www.taranakiplants.net.nz.



Finances remain secure

The Council finished the year with a deficit of \$0.19 million, which was \$0.65 million below budget due to dividend revenues \$1.6 million less than budgeted. Savings in expenditure, mainly through planned deferral of projects, mitigated the impact of the reduced income. Expenditure was \$10.8 million, which was \$0.8 million less than programmed.

The timing of the predicted lifting of the cap on Maui gas and the consequent effect

on methanol exports and therefore Port Taranaki dividends has always been uncertain. It occurred during the 2005/2006 year.

This inevitable revenue reduction has been cushioned by the Council's strong balance sheet developed over the years. Long-planned adjustments have now been made to ensure that the Council is appropriately resourced to meet its obligations, Port Taranaki has

At a glance:

- Savings mitigate predicted reduced income
- Impact on ratepayers minimised

appropriate shareholder support during a period of major change, and the impact on ratepayers is minimised.

The Council's financial position remains strong with no public debt. Total public equity remained essentially constant at \$64.5 million.

Summary Financial Report of the Taranaki Regional Council for the year ended 30 June 2006

Financial performance and financial position	2005/2006 Actual \$	2005/2006 Budget \$	2004/2005 Actual \$
Total revenue received including general rates of \$4.3m, dividends of \$0.84m and direct charges of \$2.7m	10,615,530	12,071,032	11,319,026
Total expenditure	10,807,109	11,618,450	10,474,723
Operating surplus/(deficit)	(191,579)	452,582	844,303
Total non current assets at 30 June (including investment in Port Taranaki Ltd, \$26m)	60,311,520	59,118,552	63,176,479
Total current assets at 30 June	5,928,245	1,499,704	3,343,924
Total non-current liabilities at 30 June	409,870	450,000	402,604
Total current liabilities at 30 June	1,312,092	1,400,000	1,554,417
<i>Movements in community ownership were:</i>			
Opening balance	64,563,382	56,725,679	58,156,079
Plus operating surplus/(deficit)	(191,579)	452,582	844,303
Plus asset revaluations	146,000	1,589,995	5,563,000
Closing balance	64,517,803	58,768,256	64,563,382
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	2,241,822	1,145,573	473,128
<i>The net cash flows were from:</i>			
• Operating activities	72,956	1,395,007	1,580,380
• Investing activities	2,168,866	(249,494)	(1,107,252)

This summary financial report is from the Taranaki Regional Council 2005/2006 Annual Report dated 20 September 2006. The Annual Report received an unqualified audit opinion dated 20 September 2006. This summary annual report has been audited and an unqualified opinion dated 29 September 2006 has been received. The summary report can not provide as complete an understanding as the full Annual Report which is available at any of the region's libraries. Request a free copy from the Council offices (ph 06 765 7127) or email publications@trc.govt.nz or visit the Council's website www.trc.govt.nz.

Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

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AFTER HOURS CONTACT NUMBERS

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REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

New Plymouth Constituency:

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 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

Audit report to the readers of Taranaki Regional Council's summary financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2006



We have audited the summary annual report.

Unqualified opinion:

In our opinion:

- the summary annual report represents, fairly and consistently, the information regarding the major matters dealt with in the annual report; and
- the information reported in the summary financial statements complies with FRS-39: *Summary Financial Reports* and is consistent with the full financial statements from which it is derived.

We expressed an unqualified audit opinion, in our report dated 20 September 2006, on:

- the full financial statements; and
- the Council's compliance with the other requirements of Schedule 10 of the Local Government Act 2002 that apply to the annual report.

Basis of Opinion

Our audit was conducted in accordance with the Auditor-General's Auditing Standards, which include New Zealand Auditing Standards. Other than the audit, provision of tax advice and in conducting the audit of the Long Term Council Community Plan, we have no relationship with or interests in the Regional Council.

Responsibilities of the Council and the Auditor

The Council is responsible for preparing the summary annual report and we are responsible for expressing an opinion on that report. These responsibilities arise from the Local Government Act 2002.

*Bruce Taylor, Deloitte
 On behalf of the Auditor-General
 Hamilton, New Zealand
 29 September 2006*

Busy year for policy and planning

Fundamental to policy and planning is the review process that ensures programmes remain relevant and on track. In this regard the 2005/2006 year has been a busy one. As part of the current review of the *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki*, a draft document has been released for comment to key stakeholders.

The statement provides an overview of the resource management issues of the region

and sets strategic directions for achieving integrated management across water, air and coastal resources, and between and within this Council and the district councils. The draft will be available for public consideration and submissions later this year.

The Council's pest plant and pest animal management strategies are also under review and are currently going through a full public consultation process. The overwhelming feedback so far on these review processes has been that our policies and strategies have served the region very well and do not require major amendment on review.

An inventory of 155 key native ecosystems with indigenous biodiversity values of regional significance has now been completed. Together with the Council's existing inventory and wetland protection programme, this new data provides a solid



foundation for Council programmes of incentives and services to landowners to protect these important assets.

Recent changes to aquaculture industry management led the Council to identify suitable aquaculture management areas for the region. The exercise has identified areas that might not or potentially might be available for aquaculture and thereby provides useful information for recreation and amenity planning.

At a glance:

- *Regional Policy Statement for Taranaki*, under review
- Pest plant and pest animal management strategies under review
- Inventory of key native ecosystems completed
- Aquaculture constraints mapping exercise completed.

Council keeps in touch

An important part of Council business is keeping the region informed on activities, particularly progress in the sustainable use of Taranaki's resources.

One of our significant tools in this regard is the Taranaki Regional Xplorer public enquiry web site. This award-winning information system was launched in partnership with Stratford and South Taranaki district councils and contains a broad range of geographic and local government information. It continues to be very popular, attracting on average monthly visits for the year of 53,951 rising to 61,784 in October 2005. Along with an overview of the region and the Council's significant activities, the site provides direct access to information about the Council and enables visitors to request further information or provide feedback on topical issues. New rural and urban aerial photography taken in January and February will be loaded on to the web site later this year. The visual information includes new high-resolution photographs for some urban areas in Taranaki that will be a valuable resource.

To see Taranaki Regional Xplorer or to check out live regional data on rainfall; bathing water quality; river levels, temperatures and flows; or wind speed and direction data; or a raft of Council news on the web site, visit www.trc.govt.nz.

At a glance:

- Xplorer web site popular
- 3,500 students learn about the environment

Each year, the Council recognises dozens of people who, as individuals or groups, have enhanced where we live. This year environmental awards were presented to 11 recipients

in business/local authority, agricultural or individual/school/community categories for their practical contributions. This was the 13th year of the Council's environmental awards that annually provide an insight into varieties of environmental work.



One important focus is Taranaki's schools, where the Council works with teachers and students in an ongoing environmental education programme that includes field trips, school visits and teacher training workshops. Schools regularly receive the specially designed *S.I.T.E.* (Schools in the Environment) newsletter and in the past year 57 units of work and 242 additional resources covering topics such as weather, rivers, coast, recycling, sustainable land management, civil defence emergency management and trees. In addition, more than 3,500 students were involved in teaching sessions and 670 other visitors made the most of the Council's aquarium and informative display areas.

The refreshment of the Taranaki Naturally gallery at Puke Ariki was completed as part of the Council's partnership with the Library and Museum. The remainder of the Council's annual contribution has been allocated to production of a short film on Mount Taranaki.