

## Drought puts the heat on

A prolonged dry spell over the summer saw rivers in some parts of Taranaki reach historical low levels and a drought declaration covering a large part of the region.

The Taranaki Regional Council Chairman, David MacLeod, declared there were drought conditions in the area of Coastal Taranaki extending south from Okato, through all of South Taranaki District to the region's southern boundary, and including southern and eastern parts of the Stratford District.

Mr MacLeod said other parts of the region were also experiencing dry conditions but the Taranaki Regional Council believed the area covered by the declaration was where conditions are critical.

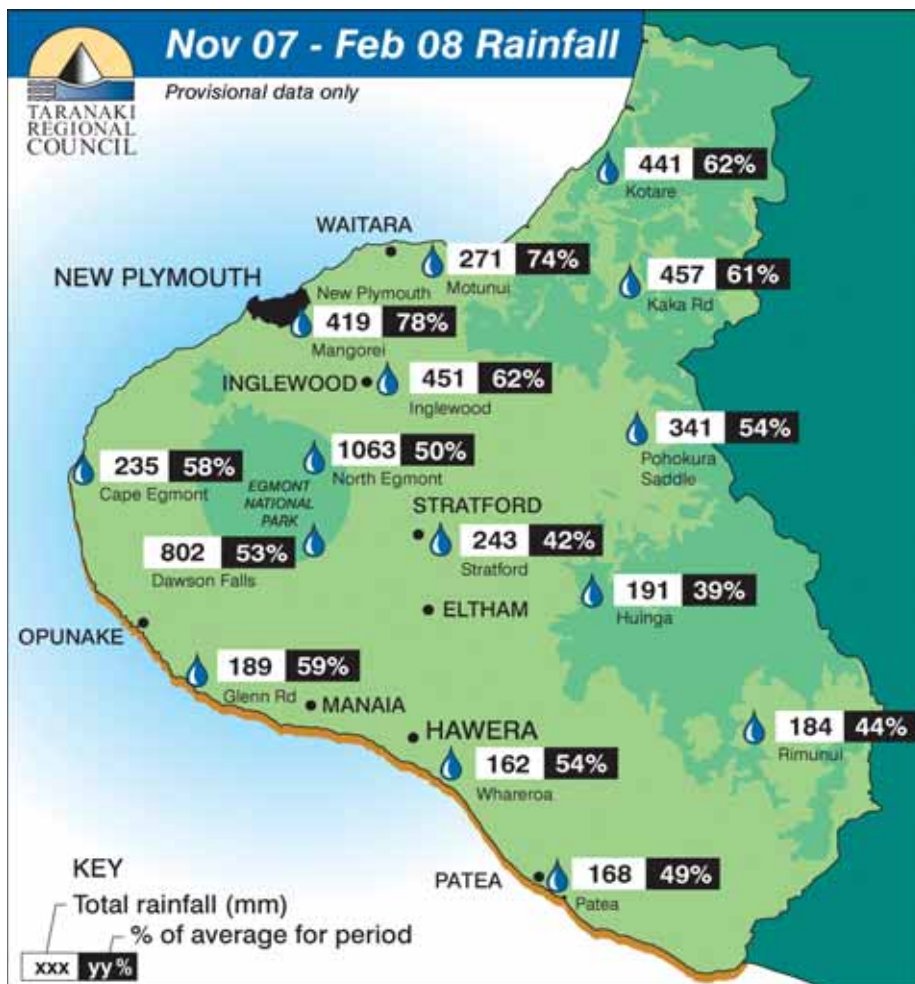
"The Council is formally asking the Government, and in particular Agriculture Minister Jim Anderton, to provide all reasonable assistance to farmers suffering undue stress as a result of this extreme situation. MAF is offering financial and welfare assistance to affected farmers through the region's Rural Support Trust."

The dry summer has also resulted in the Taranaki Regional Council taking action under its Water Shortage Procedure, and the climatic conditions have highlighted the importance of the Council's Riparian Management Programme.

All three district councils in the region were also forced to impose water restrictions, though in the case of New Plymouth District these were confined to Oakura and Inglewood.

A feature of the dry spell was its early beginning, with rainfall tapering off in November. Areas south and east of the mountain and on the coast were particularly hard hit.

In the four months from 1 November 2007 to 29 February 2008, Stratford received 243 mm of rainfall, or just 42% of average. Huinga, Rimunui and Patea were also below 50%, while the Coastal strip from Hawera to Cape Egmont received not much more than half the



average rainfall for the period.

North of the mountain, the deficit was in the range of 60% to 75%.

Huinga had its lowest February rainfall since records began in 1997, while the same month's total at Cape Egmont, 22.5 mm, was 23% of normal.

Overall, January and February 2008 were actually wetter than the corresponding months in 2007. But this summer's rainfall was still below average and the effect was worse because the last two months of 2007 were considerably drier than November and December in 2006.

Among rivers to reach their lowest February levels since records began 30 years ago were the Waingongoro River at Eltham Road and the Waiwhakaiho River at Egmont Village.

Across the region, mean river flows were running up to four times lower than their normal monthly flows. The Manganui River at Everett Park, for example, had a mean February flow of 4,974 litres a second, compared with an average February flow of 19,882 litres a second.

River temperatures have also been above normal, with the Waiwhakaiho at Egmont

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## From the Chair

Dry times are challenging times, even here in Taranaki where we generally don't suffer the sorts of climatic extremes that can afflict other regions in New Zealand and overseas.

With its strong drying winds and comparatively small reservoir capacity, this region doesn't need too many rainless days for stress to set in.

So a drought like the one we've been experiencing has serious consequences on multiple fronts – economically, socially and, of course, environmentally.

It is environmental issues that this Council focuses mainly upon – and environmental well-being is a vital underpin for both economic and social well-being.

In our monitoring of the region's environmental health during the dry summer, it's been noticeable that stream temperatures and biological stress have been lower in catchments where there has been significant riparian management.

Dry summer or no dry summer, the scientific evidence is already clear: Properly established riparian buffers enhance water quality by filtering agricultural run-off, and reducing the speed of run-off, which moderates stream flows, reduces flooding and increases baseline flows.

Riparian buffers also provide food and shelter for wildlife and corridors for plants and birds. Streamside vegetation also reduces water temperatures and supplies food for aquatic insects that in turn provide food for fish.

All this has made riparian management central to the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord and its Regional Action Plan for Taranaki.

Many of the region's land owners already understand its importance and at their request, the Council has drawn up free riparian management plans covering more than 60% of the dairy farmland on the Taranaki ring plain.

The Council has supplied more than 1 million trees at cost for riparian planting, but still implementation of these plans has been proceeding at a slower than desirable pace. The amount of fencing and planting needs to at least double if the Regional Action Plan's targets for 2010 – less than two years away – are to be met.

Perhaps we can see the dry summer as an unobtrusive reminder from Mother Nature about the importance of this work. A one-in-30-year summer it may have been but with climate change upon us, the vagaries of the weather are more uncertain than ever. Let's help to ensure our waterways stay in the best shape possible.

David MacLeod – Chairman



## Council plans year's activities

The release of the Taranaki Regional Council's *Draft Annual Plan 2008/2009* is a good opportunity to reflect on the unique nature of the Taranaki environment and the way it underpins so much of our livelihoods and lifestyles, says the Council Chairman, David MacLeod.

Taranaki's 723,000 hectares boast fertile soils and clean, fast-flowing rivers and streams – more than 300 of them coming off the mountain. Our 300 km of coastline features a variety of natural habitats and beaches where water quality is generally high. The air is fresh and clean, thanks to prevailing westerly winds and a relatively low concentration of heavy industry.

That's not to say challenges don't exist, says Mr MacLeod. Intensified dairying and urban growth put pressure on biodiversity and the integrity of both soil and fresh water. Climate change introduces new complexities into decisions about the wisest use of natural resources. Exotic pest plants and animals threaten biodiversity and agricultural production. The picturesque mountain is actually a volcano that will one day stir from its slumber – one of a number of potential natural or man-made calamities for which we must prepare.

Taking a cohesive and region-wide approach to these and other issues, the Taranaki Regional Council works under a number of statutes to provide environmental management, emergency management and public transport services over the area from Mohakatino in the north to Waitotara in the south, from Cape Egmont in the west to Pohokura Saddle in the east.

"This is the time of year when we come to you, the people of Taranaki, to talk about our activities for the financial year ahead," says Mr MacLeod.

Every household has been sent a summary of the Council's *Draft 2008/2009 Annual Plan*, produced as part of a process that allows the region to

have a say before the Council commits to its programme for the year.

Overall, the Council is proposing a "business as usual" plan for 2008/2009. There are no major departures from the course charted in the *2006/2016 Long-Term Council Community Plan*, adopted two years ago after extensive consultation.

"One major focus continues to be passenger transport," says Mr MacLeod. "The demand for bus services continues to grow at a significant rate, and the cost of providing these services is also increasing."

Funding is by way of Land Transport New Zealand subsidies and targeted rates – and it is the latter that will change this year, as detailed in the summary of the draft annual plan and in the full draft, which is available on the council website, [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz), and at libraries

and district council offices throughout the region.

Similarly, there are changes in the targeted rate for flood control.

"Overall and despite increased demands, the Council is pleased to be able to hold rates to the forecast level. The Council's general rate requirement is significantly reduced by the dividends it receives from Port Taranaki Ltd. For 2008/2009 these

dividends are forecast at \$2.6 million."

The Council's charge-out rates for staff, affecting the cost for work such as resource consent applications and compliance monitoring, are by most measures lower than the rest of the country. This will still be the situation even after a proposed increase next financial year – the first since 2002/2003.

Overall, the Council remains in a strong financial and operational position.

Submissions on the draft close at 4pm on Monday, 28 April. Guidelines on making submissions on the *Draft Annual Plan* are on the back page of the summary that has been sent to all households, and on the Council website.

More copies of the summary are available by calling the Council on 06 765 7127 or e-mailing [info@trc.govt.nz](mailto:info@trc.govt.nz).





Peter Johnston surveys his dry paddocks. They were beginning to green up after 30 mm of rain in the first weekend of March, but drying winds were still a worry.

# Drought puts the heat on

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Village recording a new high of 25 deg C.

Soil moisture, as monitored by the Council at eight sites across the region, also reached low levels.

The Taranaki Regional Council's Director-Resource Management, Fred McLay, says it has been noticeable that stream temperatures and in-stream biological stress has been lower in catchments with significant riparian planting.

"Fencing waterways has the immediate effect of keeping stock out and in times of low flows this can be crucial. In our monitoring of bathing water at the mouth of the Timaru Stream, we saw the effects of stock in water further upstream – high bacteriological counts that provoked a health warning to swimmers.

"The other element of riparian management is streamside planting and besides filtering agricultural run-off, this has the effect of keeping water temperatures down and thus protecting both water quality and biodiversity.

"Under hot summer conditions, the importance of this really becomes obvious."

As a result of the summer's low rainfall and river flows, the Council invoked three of the four steps in its Water Shortage Procedure, effectively ending the taking of water for pasture irrigation in most areas.

The Council was closely monitoring the situation to determine if there was a need to take the final step of the procedure, which is issuing a Water Shortage Direction under the Resource Management Act.

This would require consent holders to restrict or completely halt their water take.

"Our approach has been to assist water users where possible and help them through the dry spell," says Mr McLay. "Water for domestic use and for stock is given priority under our procedures."

New Zealand's weather has been under the influence of a La Nina pattern and this is expected to continue into April. Climate change scenarios suggest Taranaki may experience more weather extremes in the form of extended dry spells as well as heavy rainfall events.

For the Taranaki region, rainfall, river, soil and wind data is posted and regularly updated on the Council's website, [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz). The Council takes river flow readings at 18 sites, rainfall data at 25 sites, soil moisture and temperature data at eight sites and water temperature data at nine sites, with most of the information available on the website's Your Environment On-line section.

## Unwelcome early start to dry

In 30 years' dairy farming at Oaonui in Coastal Taranaki, Peter Johnston has seen a dry season or three. But what hurt most this time was the early start.

"We got 74 mm of rain in November – that's when it started. That's about half what we would normally get. We've had up to 300 mm in November some years."

Mr Johnston and the 50/50 sharemilker on the 134 ha Kina Road property made an early decision to feed out and go for maximum production, to take advantage of the higher payout.

This has meant that for the first time in 30 years, Mr Johnston has had to bring in feed other than molasses.

"We produced 140 bales of hay and 120 bales of silage here. We need 300 of hay and 200 of silage.

"We've had to buy it in and we'll also get palm kernel, if we can find it."

An ace up his sleeve has been the 9 ha of turnips he grows annually for grazing. "This area is prone to drought and we've always grown turnips to help us be prepared."

Still, the last of those turnips were due to run out by the end of March and barring any decent rain spurring good grass growth, the entire herd will be dried off. By the beginning

of March the 80 heifers had already been dried off, leaving 300 animals being milked.

Mr Johnston is thankful that the farm got 80 mm of rain in January, but February was tougher. This is reflected in his production figures – until early February they were on a par with the best year but now he expects to be down 15% to 20%.

As a result of the dry season, Mr Johnston expects to put about \$40,000 worth of planned farm improvement projects on hold this year. "The focus will be on helping the sharemilker with the feed. If the animals aren't producing, then neither of us gets a return."

He is also expecting to have to spread urea in April or May so he can get feed crops in for winter.

And as if there already wasn't enough to worry about, the dry conditions have heightened the risk of facial eczema. Spoor counts are up and animals are already being treated.

Still, Mr Johnston is philosophical about the vagaries of the weather and says he's seen worse – in 1978 and even earlier, in 1968 when he was a sharemilker on the property he was eventually to own.

But he says such events make it difficult to achieve his aim of a consistent stocking rate for all seasons.

# Summer sampling reveals some water problems

Bacteriological water quality has been a problem at a number of popular freshwater recreation sites over the dry summer.

The Taranaki Regional Council monitors water quality at around 26 freshwater and beach bathing sites over summer months, with the results posted on the Council's website, [www.trc.govt.nz](http://www.trc.govt.nz).

While beach bathing water quality has been uniformly and typically high, temporary problems have been evident at a number of freshwater sites including Lake Rotomanu in New Plymouth, the mouth of the Kaupokonui River, the Scout Den pool in the Patea River at Stratford, the mouth of the Waingongoro River, the Manganui River at Everett Park and the mouth of the Timaru Stream.

The Council's Director-Environment Quality, Gary Bedford, says occasionally high *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) numbers in samples from these sites have reflected a number of factors.

"These bacteria are indicators of faecal contamination from various sources, including animals and wild fowl," Mr Bedford says.

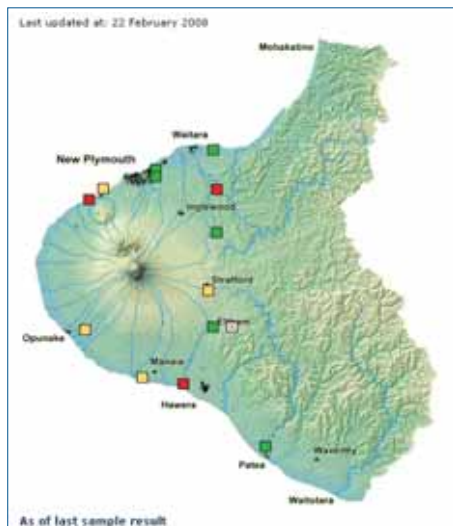
In some cases, farmers under the pressure of the dry summer have been allowing stock into waterways upstream of bathing sites. These land owners have subsequently been spoken to by Council officers.

In other cases, waterfowl have been fouling the waters – congregating in larger-than-usual numbers at Lake Rotomanu, for example, because of dry conditions elsewhere and the attraction of food provided by picnickers.

"The problem is that when disturbed by water users, the wild fowl may defecate in the vicinity of a sampling site," says Mr Bedford. "If the birds are in large numbers, this can make a significant difference to the bacteriological numbers in the water."

Another factor affecting bacteriological numbers reported on the TRC website is the amount of time since the latest significant rainfall. Rainfall can substantially increase bacterial levels in rivers and streams (and subsequently in coastal waters along the shoreline) for several days due to rural and urban runoff. Generally, the Council does not sample river and beach waters within three days of any significant rain.

If there is faecal contamination there is a possibility of the presence of disease-causing organisms such as bacteria, viruses and protozoa. These organisms may pose a health hazard to swimmers, board riders and other high-contact recreational users. Consequences may include gastrointestinal illness and respiratory health effects, such as coughs and colds.



Routine testing of freshwater bathing sites revealed problems at times over summer as indicated by orange (alert status) and red (action status) flags on the map.

Mr Bedford stresses, though, that a high concentration of indicator bacteria means that it is more likely that disease-causing organisms are present. It does not mean that anyone swimming in the water at the time will actually be affected.

The results of testing are flagged according to the number of bacteria cells found per 100 ml of water sample. For freshwater samples, "green" status applies for an *E. coli* count of 260 or below, "orange" or alert status for a count of 261 to 555 and "red" or action status for a count higher than 550.

As well as being notified on the website, this data is notified to the Taranaki District Health Board. "Red" status will generally result in the Taranaki District Health Board directing the relevant District Council to erect warning signs at the affected site.

Mr Bedford says the number of "red" and "orange" flags at freshwater recreation

sites over the dry summer emphasise the importance of the Taranaki Regional Council riparian management programme, as there have been noticeably fewer problems in catchments where there has been a high level of streamside fencing and planting by land owners.

"Not only do the fences prevent stock getting into and fouling waterways, but the plants enhance and protect water quality by filtering agricultural runoff, regulating the flow and keeping the water temperature down."

Besides bacteriological testing, the Council has also been testing samples from five freshwater sites for cyanobacteria. Cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, are very small plant-like organisms found in freshwater lakes and rivers where they can build up to very large numbers under certain conditions.

Cyanobacteria can cause skin irritation, and some species contain toxic substances and have been linked to negative effects on human and animal health. They can cause nausea, stomach upsets, and tingling and numbness around the mouth or tips of fingers. If toxin levels are really high, involuntarily or accidentally drinking the water could result in severe liver damage.

The Council has been monitoring summer cyanobacteria levels at Lake Rotomanu, the Waiwhakaiti River at Merrilands, Lake Ratapiko, Lake Rotokare and Lake Opunake.

Cyanobacteria levels have been very high at Lake Rotokare throughout the summer and Mr Bedford says this is because of the natural characteristics of this lake, which has minimal inflows and outflows. There have been no major problems at other sites.



## Stream home to rare beauty

This rare golden eel was spotted by Taranaki Regional Council officers carrying out a nocturnal fish survey in a North Taranaki stream recently.

Fewer than one in 100,000 eels are thought to be golden, a condition caused by a lack of melanin in the creature's skin.

Golden eels are traditionally seen as taonga and guardians of the environment.

The fish survey was undertaken to assess the effectiveness of a fish pass on a weir on the stream concerned. The Council officers found good numbers of short-jawed kokopu and longfin eels.



Maintenance, observation and training are needed for the successful operation of effluent irrigation systems.

## Farm dairy compliance falters

Last year's record high dairy discharge compliance rate in Taranaki is unlikely to be repeated this season, with figures so far suggesting a disappointing result.

Non-compliance dropped to 2.7% in 2006/2007 but is likely to be around 5% for 2007/2008 – on a par with the average of 4% to 5% in the years preceding last year.

Non-compliance includes minor and serious incidents, the latter accounting for 1% to 2% and generally resulting in pollution.

The Taranaki Regional Council's Director-Resource Management, Fred McLay, says the trend so far this season is disappointing, although the non-compliance rate remains lower than in other comparable regions.

He says the Council's regime of consenting and monitoring farm dairy discharges has contributed to the region continuing to enjoy relatively good-quality surface water and ground water, despite a doubling of the

dairy herd over the past 20 years.

To maintain this position, the Council needs to continue implementing its Farm Dairy Discharge Monitoring Programme, he says.

A feature of last year's low non-compliance rate was the relatively high number of prosecutions pursued by the Council. Of five prosecutions, four related to dairy effluent discharges to water or land and resulted in fines ranging from \$10,000 to \$30,000.

The Council also issued 73 abatement notices and 11 infringement notices relating to farm dairy non-compliance.

Mr McLay says the evidence shows that as the use of enforcement tools increases, the compliance rate increases.

"The higher fines now set by the Environment Court also send a strong message to those in breach of their consents," he says.

## Tips on avoiding problems

Problems with spraying systems discharging dairy effluent to land have been noticeable in farm dairy inspections.

Top tips to avoid trouble:

- Inspect and maintain the system regularly. Look out for broken pipelines and check the system is applying effluent only where and when it should.
- Observe application areas and adjacent surface watercourses regularly, before and after effluent application.
- If staff are involved in managing the effluent system, make sure they are fully trained.
- Care should be taken to avoid effluent runoff that flows to surface water via discrete flow paths such as channels, drains or tracks. These may be considered as direct discharges to surface water and may result in Regional Council action.
- Even though they are below the surface, mole and tile drains can effectively deliver effluent applied to land straight to waterways and need to be monitored. If possible, avoid these areas for effluent application.
- Avoid applying effluent over the porous backfill of land drainage systems.
- Assess the pollution risks associated with the failure of the land application system should there be a power cut, pump breakdown, or if the system does not operate to expectations. Plan what to do in such situations.

## No dry arguments on World Wetlands Day

The weather was hot but the subject matter far from dry as around 80 people gathered in eastern Taranaki on February 3 to mark World Wetlands Day.

The venue was the Toko dairy farm of Mark and Leigh Caskey, where three wetland gully areas have been fenced to exclude stock and enhanced through the creation of open ponds and through riparian planting.

Taranaki Regional Councillor Mike Davey told those attending the open day that the hot and dry summer emphasised the need to protect such wetlands, which are vital for the health of entire river systems especially when they come under such stress.

"And while these land owners have lost a bit of grazable land, the aesthetic improvement adds enormous value to the property," Mr Davey says.

The Caskeys say the wetland gully areas were formerly an eyesore and a potential death trap for stock.

Representatives of the Taranaki Regional Council, the Taranaki Tree Trust, Fish and



Taranaki Regional Councillor Mike Davey addresses the crowd at the World Wetlands Day event.

Game Taranaki and the QEII National Trust spoke at the open day, discussing the importance of wetlands and the assistance available to land owners who want to protect and enhance them.

The use, development and protection of wetlands in Taranaki is covered by rules in the Taranaki Regional Council's *Regional Freshwater Plan*. Seventy-six wetlands are in a specially protected "regionally significant" category, with around two-thirds of these having extra legal protection through

voluntary covenants and the like.

In February the Council approved Environmental Enhancement Grants totalling more than \$91,000 for the enhancement or maintenance of seven regionally significant wetlands plus whitebait spawning and habitat areas on the Tongaporutu and Hutiwai Rivers.

The regionally significant wetlands approved for funding included Lake Kaikura, the Spence Road wetland, Umutekai Bush, Huiakama Lagoon, Nowells Lake, Lake Taumaha and Lake Waiau.

The Council's Chief Executive, Basil Chamberlain, says interest is growing in the protection and enhancement of wetlands. "We now have a queue of applications for wetlands grants all over the region. It's a healthy sign."

Land owners interested in protecting and enhancing wetlands can find out more by calling the Taranaki Regional Council on 06 765 7127 and asking to speak to a Land Management Officer.



A Taranaki Regional Council officer carrying out site assessment duties at the burnt-out Patea freezing works.

## Fire throws up new challenges

The disused Patea freezing works hit the headlines on Waitangi Day when a fire and the subsequent temporary evacuation of townspeople resulted in a partial Civil Defence mobilisation.

Up to 300 people were advised to leave their homes for the day because strong winds were blowing smoke from the fire into the township, and there were fears of asbestos contamination. While not toxic in itself, asbestos can be dangerous if it is inhaled.

The Taranaki Regional Council's involvement in the Patea freezing works site has pre-dated the fire and extended beyond its role in Civil Defence Emergency Management.

As part of its environmental monitoring duties, the Council last year began preparing for an assessment of the site and any potentially dangerous substances still there. The aim was to produce a report that could help the South Taranaki District Council and local residents to make informed decisions on the site's future.

This work was put on temporary hold around the time of the 6 February fire, during which the Taranaki Emergency Management Office was activated to help co-ordinate welfare arrangements for evacuated residents and to assist with public information and media demands. The Senior Emergency Management Officer was also in Patea during the event. No Civil Defence emergency was declared, however.

Council inspectorate staff were also on hand during the fire and immediately afterwards,

taking steps to ensure any run-off from the site was contained. This was given added importance because of the need to have a water cannon operating continuously at the site to keep dust damped down and reduce the possibility of airborne asbestos contamination.

But it was only a short time before the Council arranged for a contractor to spray the site with a non-toxic suppressant, to bind and settle the dust particles and eliminate the need for the water cannon.

This operation worked well, says the Council's Director-Environment Quality, Gary Bedford, and it was pleasing that 24 air samples taken from 12 locations on the site during the operation all tested negative for asbestos.

The contractor will make regular return visits to monitor the effectiveness of the resin and apply more if necessary.

At the same time, remaining PCB material was removed from the site and the owner of one portion of the land moved to contain rubble and debris remaining on his property after the fire.

Taranaki Regional Council staff, meanwhile, have resumed their site assessment inspections, making numerous visits to the old works.

"The work has obviously become more challenging," says Mr Bedford.

The assessment report is expected to be complete by May.

## Go-ahead for Eltham project

Taranaki's major remaining freshwater point-source pollution discharge is about to be ended.

A resource consent has been approved allowing treated wastewater from Eltham to be piped to Hawera and then out to sea via the Fonterra Whareora outfall.

The Eltham wastewater has long been polluting the Mangawhero Stream, prompting the Taranaki Regional Council to seek an Environment Court enforcement order in 2003 requiring the South Taranaki District Council to fix the problem.

The Taranaki Regional Council approved a new consent in 2006 allowing the increase in the Whareora outfall discharge but an appeal was lodged by two local hapu.

That appeal was withdrawn late last year after intense negotiations and the new consent has received a final sign-off from the Department of Conservation.

The multimillion-dollar project includes pre-treatment of industrial waste in Eltham, upgrading treatment plants in Eltham and Hawera and the construction of a pumping station and a pipeline from Eltham to Hawera. The work being funded by the South Taranaki District Council and industry, and it is expected to be complete by July next year.

The Taranaki Regional Council's Director-Resource Management, Fred McLay, has welcomed final approval of the project.

"It's a positive and welcome step towards addressing Taranaki's worst point-source pollution problem," he says.

## Consent for cremator

Also approved is a resource consent allowing discharges to air from a proposed cremator to be established at Bell Block by W Abraham Limited.

The Taranaki Regional Council's Director-Environment Quality, Gary Bedford, said in a report to the Council's Consents and Regulatory Committee that there had been no public submissions and the applicant had discussed the proposal with affected parties, most of whom seemed satisfied there would be minimal environmental effects.

The proposal for a cremator at Bell Block followed an earlier proposal for one at W Abrahams Ltd's premises in Devon Street East, New Plymouth, in 2004. This was withdrawn after public outcry.



Eighty people attended the Taranaki Regional Council's carbon farming seminar in Douglas, one of three held around the region.

## Opportunities in climate initiatives

New environmental and economic opportunities presented by the Government's climate change initiatives have been explored at a series of seminars organised by the Taranaki Regional Council.

The carbon farming seminars were held at Uruti in November and at Douglas and Waverley in February. Hillcountry farmers were the main target.

Some 60 people at the Uruti seminar, 80 at Douglas and 40 at Waverley heard speakers and presentations from the Taranaki Regional Council, MAF, the forestry industry and carbon brokers.

A major emphasis was the business opportunities that exist for land owners in climate change initiatives such as the Forestry Emissions Trading Scheme, the Permanent Forest Sink Initiative and the Afforestation Grants Scheme.

The Permanent Forest Sink Initiative in particular offers hillcountry land owners new scope for developing useful new income streams off steep, highly erosion-prone, infertile land – while at the same time meeting the sorts of soil conservation objectives pursued by the Council.

There is flexibility, too, so the land owner can decide which land pockets might be best for reversion to scrub and which would be best for

planting trees.

No matter what the option, such vegetation in this steep country will help to prevent sediment run-off into streams and so enhance water quality throughout the entire catchment.

The Council's Director-Operations, Rob Phillips, says it is still early days but worth it for farmers to get as much information as possible and to think about how to take best advantage. A good starting point would be to talk to a Taranaki Regional Council Land Management Officer.

The Council may be able to assist in a variety of ways – for example by supplying historical photos that may be needed by those thinking of taking up one of the climate change initiatives and who need to prove that their forest did not exist prior to 1990, which is the nominal start point for these initiatives.

Private companies are positioning themselves to work with land owners to take advantage of the new initiatives, and representatives of some of them were among speakers at the Council's carbon farming seminars.

Mr Phillips says this does not imply Council endorsement of any particular company, but simply recognizes that some objectives are shared. He emphasizes the need for people to seek independent advice.

## Total mobility voucher users will need I.D. Card

An identity card is being introduced for users of the Total Mobility taxi voucher scheme in Taranaki.

From April 7, passengers will be unable to obtain Total Mobility taxi discounts unless they produce a new ID card issued by the Taranaki Regional Council, which administers the scheme.

Total Mobility vouchers are for people unable to use public transport because of health or disability issues. The vouchers are distributed through a number of community

organisations and the Council has already contacted many users directly to arrange ID cards for them.

Total Mobility voucher users who have not already heard from the Council can call a toll-free number, 0800 736 222, to have an ID card application form sent to them.

The Council's Director-Operations, Rob Phillips, says the ID cards are being introduced to improve management of the scheme, the cost of which has expanded rapidly in recent years.

## Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

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Telephone:	0-6-765 7127
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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
Peter Horton	0-6-758 8011
Moira Irving	0-6-756 6441
David Lean	0-6-753 3325
Barry Marsh	0-6-758 2252

#### North Taranaki Constituency:

Mike Davey	0-6-756 7126
Roger Maxwell	0-6-752 3622

#### South Taranaki Constituency:

Michael Joyce	0-6-274 5800
David MacLeod (Chairman)	0-6-278 5577
Neil Walker	0-6-278 7541

#### Stratford Constituency:

Brian Jeffares	0-6-765 7773
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### MEETING SCHEDULE:

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

**Monday 31 March, 10am:**  
Executive Committee

**Tuesday 8 April, 10.30am:**  
Ordinary Council meeting

**Tuesday 29 April, 10.30am:**  
Consents and Regulatory Committee

**Thursday 1 May, 10.30am:**  
Policy and Planning Committee

**Monday 12 May, 10am:**  
Executive Committee

**Monday 12 May, 10.30am:**  
Ordinary Council meeting (submissions to Draft Annual Plan)

**Tuesday 20 May, 10.30am:** Ordinary Council meeting  
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# Final phase for major review of core policy

A detailed review of the Taranaki Regional Council's major policy document is entering its final phase.

Final submissions on a proposed new *Regional Policy Statement (RPS)* have been analysed and a series of meetings with submitters is being organised before final hearings in June or July.

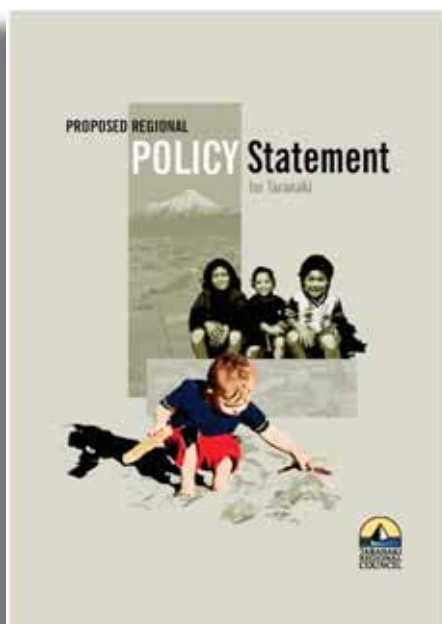
The *RPS* is a formal statutory document covering the management of natural and physical resources in the region, extending out to the 12 nautical mile (22.2 km) coastal limit.

One of the main purposes of the *RPS* is to provide for the integrated management of Taranaki's natural and physical resources. This means considering the environment as a whole and recognising that changes, or the effects of human activities, in one area or on one resource, can affect other resources.

It is a key legal resource management policy document for the Council and for the region because all regional and district plans prepared by Council and the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki District Councils must give effect to the *RPS*. It must also be considered by the regional and district councils when handling resource consent applications.

The policies and methods in the *RPS* give high-level policy direction. The document does not contain rules that would require someone to gain a resource consent, but rather provides direction to those plans that do contain rules.

The first *RPS* for Taranaki was developed in 1994 and under the Resource Management Act, a review is required every 10 years. This



process began in 2003, with the proposed new *RPS* publicly notified for submissions in September 2006.

Thirty-five submissions and 21 further submissions supporting or opposing the initial submissions have been received, with a total of 585 separate submission points made.

Among issues of concern to submitters are minerals, energy supply, landscape issues, biodiversity, water allocation, water quality, infrastructure and land-use planning, coastal management, soil erosion, use and development of resources, adverse effects and directions to territorial authorities.

The Taranaki Regional Council's Director-Resource Management, Fred McLay, says officers have prepared a report responding to each submission point and recommending acceptance, partial acceptance, rejection or

making another change to achieve the same result.

"This report will be used as a basis for pre-hearing meetings with submitters over the next two months. This step should reduce the number of issues that submitters wish to present at a hearing," he says.

Meanwhile, work has commenced on reviews of the *Regional Coastal Plan for Taranaki* and the *Regional Air Quality Plan for Taranaki*.

These documents contain rules for resource use and protection of the environment. They set out whether and under what conditions particular resource-use or development activities require resource consents to be obtained from the Council. The plans also identify what activities can be undertaken without consents and the standards that must be met.

Relevant stakeholders have already been consulted about these reviews and public submissions processes will take place later in the year.

A *Draft Biodiversity Strategy* has also been prepared by Taranaki Regional Council officers and is being circulated to stakeholders.

The *Strategy* assesses the work already being done by the Council and other agencies in the region to protect, restore or enhance indigenous biodiversity. It also identifies where gaps might exist and it lists priorities for future action.

After feedback is assessed and any necessary amendments finalised, the *Strategy* is expected to be formally adopted by the Council within the next few months.

## Farm plastic recycling scheme extended

A scheme for recycling silage wrap and other farm plastics has been extended into North Taranaki.

Inglewood contractor Ken Moratti is now involved in the Agpac recycling scheme, which is also available through Mark Hinton or Barry Taunt in Stratford, and Michael Silson in Kaponga.

Under the scheme, farmers are supplied a large bin and liners in which to contain the plastic wrap. These are collected for recycling when full.

Silage wrap and other farm plastics have traditionally been disposed of by burning or burying, causing environmental damage.

Under the Agpac system, farmers are urged to bin their plastic immediately it comes off the bale instead of leaving it to lie around and become excessively contaminated with manure, dirt and other material.

The bin liner is made of the same material as the silage wrap, so the whole unit needs no further processing before being presented at a recycling plant.

The scheme operates two streams. The first includes baleage wrap, silage pit covers, small feed and fertiliser bags, plastic packaging and shrink wrap. The second includes bulk feed or fertiliser bags that have woven PP outer bags and LDPE inner bags.

Farmers can buy a bin (\$480 + GST) and liners (\$10 + GST), then either drop off the full liner (\$20 + GST) or arrange to have it collected (\$40 + GST).

For more details, call Mr Moratti on 06 756 8066 or 027 443 4858, Mr Hinton on 06 765 6668, Mr Taunt on 06 762 2890 or 021 139 9875, or Mr Silson on 06 764 6222.

- Egmont Refuse in Scott St, Hawera, is accepting silage wrap for no charge on a trial basis. It needs to be contained, for example in urea bags (which also helps prevent further contamination), and should be as clean as possible. So it needs a good shake before putting it in the bags. For more details, call Raymond Buckland on 06 278 6170.