

From the Chair

They say every picture is worth 1,000 words – but the map on the cover of this edition of *Recount* is worth millions of plants and thousands of kilometres of fencing.



It's a graphic illustration of how the Council's riparian (streamside) management programme has moved firmly into its implementation phase, with more and more dairy farmers understanding how important it is and including it in their budgets and work programmes.

The map shows progress towards our goal of having every kilometre of streambank on the Taranaki ring plain protected with fencing and vegetation. It takes into account pre-existing fencing and vegetation, as well as the almost 2 million plants that have gone into the ground as part of the riparian programme.

Since the mid-1990s, the Council has been working with land owners to prepare individually tailored riparian management plans for their properties. More than 95% of the region's dairy farmers now have a plan, and the focus is firmly on making those plans reality.

The Council also bulk purchases riparian plants for farmers, and it's pleasing to note an increase in plant orders for the coming planting season. Riparian protection work is obviously being increasingly seen as part of the day-to-day business of dairy farming.

Collectively, it's no small undertaking. When the programme is completed, a distance greater than the New Zealand coastline will be protected with fences and vegetation. So it was gratifying to see this effort recognised with a Resource Management Law Association award last year, and again this year with a global award recognising the smart use of GIS technology for the project.

The biggest reward, though, is in the protection and enhancement of water quality that results from this work. And while the Council is doing everything it can to promote the scheme and assist land owners, its success ultimately depends on the efforts of the region's dairy farmers.

This edition of *Recount* also has pleasing news for those who work or shop in The Valley at Waiwhakaiho. Stage 1 is well under way as part of a three-stage project to significantly increase the level of flood protection along the lower Waiwhakaiho River. When it's complete, protection will be of a one-in-100-year standard instead of the current one-in-50-year protection. And in calculating the extra protection required, allowance has been made for 50 years of climate change

- David MacLeod, CHAIRMAN

Project goes mainstream

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The Dairy Section Chair of Taranaki Federated Farmers, Derek Gibson, says that in his personal opinion, riparian protection work is not a major cost if it is programmed over a number of years. Through the Council's bulk-purchase scheme, 300 plants cost around \$1,000, while a two-wire fence costs \$3.50 to \$4 a metre, including labour.



The riparian programme is transforming the landscape on the Taranaki ring plain.

"This level of tax-deductible investment should be manageable for most farmers when you consider the overall budget for an average dairy farm," says Mr Gibson. "It's also a practical and cost-effective demonstration that stewardship of the land is something farmers take seriously."

The Council's Director-Operations, Rob Phillips, says if every riparian plan-holder ordered 300 plants this season, around 600,000 riparian plants would be added to the almost 2 million that are already established along stream banks to protect water quality.

"If we could achieve this sort of momentum, we would be well on the way to meeting the region's Dairying and Clean Streams Accord target of having 90% of the riparian fencing and planting completed by 2015," he says.

"Taranaki dairy farmers have a reputation as pioneers in the industry, always at the forefront of new developments. We're sure most of our dairy farmers will meet the challenge of completing the riparian programme with the same 'can-do' attitude."

Mountain focus for wetlands day

World Wetlands Day was marked with a public field trip to Potaema Swamp in Egmont National Park in January.

Around 70 people inspected the wetland and heard addresses by representatives of the Department of Conservation, Taranaki Regional Council, Fish and Game Taranaki and the Taranaki Tree Trust.

The Taranaki Regional Council promotes wetland protection through education, advice and information. This includes advice to land owners on fencing, riparian planting and covenanting to protect wetlands.

The Council focuses particularly on protecting wetlands identified in its Regional Fresh Water Plan for Taranaki as "regionally significant". These number 77 wetlands or groups of wetlands covering 2,812 hectares.



Some of the 70 people who took part in a World Wetlands Day field trip to Potaema Swamp in Egmont National Park in January.

By the end of the 2009/2010 financial year, 44 had full formal protection and another six were protected in part.

In the same period, the Council made Environmental Enhancement Grants totalling more than \$60,000 for work at six regionally significant wetlands. Funding is mainly for retirement fencing, planting and weed control.

Potaema Swamp is among 300 ha of wetlands in Egmont National Park classified as regionally significant.

Taranaki plants itself on world stage

The international scale of Taranaki's streamside fencing and planting programme has been highlighted with a global award for the smart use of technology to back the project.

The award, made at the Geospatial World Forum in Hyderabad, India, in January, recognises the role of computer-based Geographical Information Systems (GIS) in the Council's riparian (streamside) management programme on the Taranaki ringplain.

"There were 173 nominations for the Excellence Award for Land and Resource Management, so we're honoured and delighted to have won it," says the Council Chairman, David MacLeod. "It's come hard on the heels of last year's NZ Resource Management Law Association award for the overall riparian project, and it again shows how Taranaki punches above its weight in resource management as well as a lot of other endeavours."

The Council has developed GIS tools to help its staff prepare riparian protection plans for farms on the ringplain as part of the ambitious programme to have every waterway fenced and planted to prevent stock fouling waterways and to filter pasture run-off.

Mr MacLeod says the GIS tools have been critical in allowing Council officers to prepare a large number of riparian protection plans in a relatively short time, and the award recognises this practical and beneficial application of the technology.

"It's a highly efficient way to get plans quickly into the hands of farmers, giving them precise information on when and where to fence and plant, and what to plant," he says.



Taranaki Regional Council Chairman David MacLeod (right) and Director-Corporate Services, Mike Nield, with the Excellence Award and the report that was presented to the Geospatial World Forum.

"We've prepared plans for nearly all dairy farms on the ringplain, at no cost to land owners, and now the emphasis is firmly on implementing the plans. So far, nearly 70% of streambanks are fenced and nearly 60% are protected with vegetation."

Counting pre-existing fences and vegetation, a distance close to the length of the New Zealand coastline will be protected by the time the project ends, with millions of native plants dug into the ground and thousands of kilometres of fencing erected.

The Council also bulk orders native plants for the project and supplies them at cost to land owners, and co-ordinates contractors

if farmers opt not to do the physical work themselves.

"The programme is voluntary and has had good buy-in from land owners," says Mr MacLeod. "Environmental benefits are already flowing from it, but it's great to see this massive effort recognised with an international award."

Around 2,500 people from 76 countries attended the Geospatial World Forum in Hyderabad. The award was accepted by the Council's Director-Corporate Service, Mike Nield, whose travel and accommodation were paid for by forum organisers.

Christchurch quake expert to speak in Taranaki



Professor Jarg Pettinga, head of Geological Sciences at Canterbury University.

A Christchurch-based geologist and tectonics expert will address a public meeting in New Plymouth in March focusing on the cause and consequences of the Canterbury earthquakes.

He is Professor Jarg Pettinga, head of the Geological Sciences Department at the University of Canterbury. Prof Pettinga established and has led the Canterbury Active Tectonics and Earthquake Hazards Research Group for the past two decades.

His visit was arranged before the 22 February earthquake by the Taranaki Geological Society, with assistance from the Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency

Management Group.

Prof Pettinga will speak at the New Plymouth District Council chambers at 7.30pm on Monday 28 March.

"We're anticipating huge interest in Prof Pettinga's presentation," says the Taranaki Civil Defence Controller, David Lean. "He has built up a vast knowledge of earthquake-related hazards in New Zealand, and his talk will be profoundly interesting."

"The initial expectation and invitation was for him to talk about the September earthquake, but obviously he will now also be discussing the latest one."

Annual plan out for consultation

Public consultation on the Taranaki Regional Council's Draft Annual Plan for 2011/2012 runs from 21 March to 22 April, with the document available in public libraries across the region. A summary leaflet is also being distributed with community newspapers.

The Council Chairman, David MacLeod, says the Council plays a key role in the region, managing natural resources to both protect the environment and allow economic progress. Its role also includes hazard management, transport planning and services, the stewardship of premier heritage gardens, and 100% ownership of Port Taranaki.

He says that in the 2009/2010 year, the Council processed resource consents that allowed at least \$205 million worth of investment, and renewed consents involving investments of \$55 million.

"At the same time, our monitoring shows the region continues to enjoy a relatively high-quality environment. Freshwater quality is stable or improving, coastal water and air quality are excellent, soils are healthy and managed sustainably, and more wetlands and key native ecosystems are being protected."

For the 2011/2012 year, the Council plans to continue with the programmes and activities that have led to these and other



successes. "With some minor adjustments, we plan to follow the programmes outlined in the 2009/2010 Long-Term Plan which was adopted after wide community consultation."

Proposed areas of focus during 2011/2012 year include improving flood protection along the lower Waiwhakaiti River ("The

Valley"); further enhancing and promoting the New Plymouth urban bus service; planning the long-term development of Pukeiti; and adjusting dairy effluent monitoring.

Mr MacLeod says the Council faces a budget shortfall of \$1 million in dividends from Port Taranaki Ltd. It proposes to absorb \$600,000 of the shortfall by controlling costs and increasing revenue from other sources, and will also draw \$71,400 from its Dividend Equalisation Fund (built up from years when port dividends exceeded budget).

It proposes to meet the rest of the shortfall with a general rates increase of \$329,067.

"The rates increases are small in dollar terms," says Mr MacLeod. "For example, a residential property with a capital value of \$500,000 will face an increase of less than \$14," he says.

"And without the shortfall in port dividends, there would be no need to increase general rates."

He says a Department of Internal Affairs survey in 2009 found the Taranaki Regional Council had the lowest per-dwelling rates in the country. "We expect this will continue to be the case in the new financial year."

Waitotora River neared 2004 level

The Waitotora River's peak level after a rainstorm on the weekend of January 22-23 was less than two metres lower than the peak recorded during the 2004 floods that devastated Waitotora township.

The Taranaki Regional Council says river clearance work that began after the 2004 floods proved its worth at the weekend.

The river level inland at Rimunui Station peaked at 11.66 metres at 11.45pm on January 23. It had been at just 55cm before the rain started. This peak flow took seven to eight hours to reach the township near the coast, but no major problems were reported there.

In 2004, the river peaked at 13.49 metres, causing widespread flooding in the lower valley. At the township, little escaped the floodwaters, with 41 of the 47 houses hit

and 14 later condemned.

"We started a long-term channel clearance programme after the 2004 floods, because the obstruction caused by willows added to the turbulence of the flow and the severity of the flooding," says the Taranaki Regional Council's Director-Operations, Rob Phillips.

"Clearing the willows has increased the capacity of the channel so it can better cope with flood flows. Without this work, flood levels would have been higher for a longer period of time.

"We're very pleased the January peak flow was contained within the river channel at the township, though some areas were inundated further up the valley and access was affected."

Mr Phillips says rainfall in the Waitotora catchment was on a par with that on Mount Taranaki during the January event.

"In the 36 hours to midday on Monday 24 January, 203.5mm was recorded at Pohokura Saddle in the headwaters of the Waitotora, 166.5mm at Rimunui Station and 127mm at Ngutuwera. Dawson Falls got 279 mm and North Egmont got 172mm in the same period."

As well as clearing the river channel, the Council has also been working with landowners in the Waitotora catchment, encouraging and supporting measures to prevent slips and erosion and thus reduce silt levels in rivers and streams. Mr Phillips says this work will have long-term benefit in the catchment.



Stage 1 of the project has involved work along Rifle Range Road beside The Valley retail centre.

Valley stopbank boost

Work is well under way to raise stopbanks along the Waiwhakaiho River at The Valley as part of a project to improve flood defences.

The contract for Stage 1 of the three-stage, \$1.5 million Taranaki Regional Council project was let to Taranaki Civil Construction. Stage 1 has involved:

- Raising the earth stopbank between Constance St and Vickers Rd, with a retaining wall constructed along a 120m section to avoid encroaching into the river channel.
- Increasing the height of rock-filled baskets (gabion baskets) upstream of Constance St, and between Vickers Rd and the mouth of the Mangaone Stream.

“The work will raise the level of the stopbank by between 0.5m and 1.5m along the entire section,” says the Council’s Rivers Manager, John Philpott. “The objective is to increase the level of protection from a one-in-50-year flood to a one-in-100-year flood. We’ve also taken into account the impact of climate change over the next 50 years.”

He says the work schedule was designed to minimise the impact on traffic along Rifle Range Rd, but some disruption was inevitable. “We’re sure workers and shoppers



An overview of Stages 1 and 2 of the project.

at The Valley retail centre will appreciate the need for this work.”

The Stage 1 work is expected to be finished in early April. Investigation work has started on Stage 2, upgrading flood protection along the Mangaone Stream downstream of Katere

Road, with work planned for late this year.

In Stage 3 of the project, three detention dams will be built in the upper Mangaone Stream catchment to further limit the flow of floodwater into the Waiwhakaiho basin. This work is scheduled for 2012-13.



Neil and Jackie Whitehead in one of the bush blocks on their property.

Bush guardians find many rewards

Efforts by private landowners to protect and enhance native bush and wildlife are paying valuable dividends for biodiversity in Taranaki – but for Tikorangi dairy farmers Neil and Jackie Whitehead, there's even more to the story.

The Whiteheads, whose 128 ha farm's bush blocks are recognised by the Taranaki Regional Council as a Key Native Ecosystem, plunged into an intensive programme of predator and weed control, monitoring, planting and track-building after two kiwi were sighted on their property in 2008.

And as well as a resurgence of native bush and birdlife on their property, they say the work has brought another, unexpected benefit.

"It's such a great release from farming's day-to-day stresses and pressures, to be able to go up to one of the bush blocks to do some different sort of work, or to just soak up the atmosphere," says Jackie. "That's a reward in itself. And you can see the native trees are now flowering and fruiting much more heavily, and the birds are fantastic."

The bush blocks contain kahikatea, rimu (including one giant with a trunk circumference of 7.8m and diameter of 2.8m), rata, king ferns, totara, nikau palms and a host of other native plants. Besides the kiwi, the property has tui, kereru, grey

warblers, fantails, silvereyes, morepork, New Zealand falcon and harrier hawk (kahu).

Since late 2008, the Whiteheads and their helpers have:

- Laid more than 100 traps and bait stations, most of them sponsored by community groups, businesses and friends and family.
- Eliminated more than 1150 predators, including possums, stoats, weasels, rats, feral cats and hedgehogs.
- Targeted woolly nightshade and Darwin's barberry, two pest plants in some of the bush areas.
- Undertaken riparian and bush-enhancement planting.
- Formed tracks through two of the three larger bush blocks, including bridges and hundreds of steps. Not only do these make predator and weed control easier, but they allow the Whiteheads to share the bush with their supporters.
- Started installing discreet interpretative signage at significant points in the bush.
- Extended the area under QEII covenant (the first covenants were made in 2005).
- Established a website (www.kererukeep.org.nz) to keep sponsors and supporters up-to-date with progress.

"The Whiteheads have achieved in two years what would reasonably be expected in five

years," says the Taranaki Regional Council's Biodiversity Operations Co-ordinator, Jake Goonan. "We admire their motivation and commitment and it's been great to work with them."

The Whiteheads bush blocks were added to the Council's Inventory of Key Native Ecosystems in 2009. Council staff have since prepared a Biodiversity Plan at no cost to the Whiteheads, and worked with the couple to implement it.

"We've learnt so much from the Council's biodiversity team and look forward to their visits," says Jackie.

Under the Biodiversity Plan, the Council has:

- Provided traps and bait stations, and education and advice on their use.
- Organised the supply of 1450 plants.
- Undertaken monitoring.
- Provided advice and assistance with track construction.
- Organised the signage for the bush.

"We've identified 163 Key Native Ecosystems in the region, most of them on private land, and each year we draw up at least 10 Biodiversity Plans and work with landowners to implement them," says the Council's Director-Operations, Rob Phillips.

"The Whiteheads are an excellent example of how successful this joint effort can be."

'Serious concern' over offshore monitoring

The Taranaki Regional Council has expressed strong concerns over the way offshore oil exploration and production is regulated and monitored beyond the 12 nautical mile territorial limit.

The Council says an RMA-style regime should apply beyond territorial waters, and it believes Government agencies need extra capacity and expertise to effectively oversee environmental and health and safety aspects of offshore hydrocarbon operations.

In a submission on a Government review of health, safety and environmental legislation for offshore petroleum operations, the Council "expresses strong concern that there are central government licensing regimes in place for the industry but there are very limited resources for monitoring and enforcement to accompany them".

"Effective regulatory review, monitoring, inspection and enforcement are clearly not possible given current levels of resourcing and this represents a serious risk to the adequacy of the existing regime to anticipate or prevent a major pollution incident from occurring."

The Council's jurisdiction extends to the 12 nautical mile limit, within which petroleum operations must comply with the Resource Management Act. The Council decides on resource consent applications and monitors and enforces consents that are granted.

The RMA doesn't apply beyond the territorial limit, with Maritime NZ and other agencies responsible for regulating and overseeing environmental aspects of hydrocarbon operations.

The Council says the Government review has "somewhat negative sentiment" for an RMA-type regime beyond 12 nautical miles, although "the RMA has worked well in this region for over 20 years and provided an efficient and effective regulatory regime".

"Appropriate policy, consenting compliance monitoring and reporting, and enforcement process are in place that, state-of-the-environment monitoring shows, are working well."

While the Council says Maritime New Zealand is the obvious candidate for taking on the role of central co-ordinator for environmental assessment, monitoring and enforcement beyond the territorial limit, it says the agency would need to co-operate closely with other bodies, including regional councils, and ensure that sufficient expertise and resources are available. "An alternative might be to delegate these powers to this Council, recognising existing expertise and organisational capability."

Turning to existing arrangements for monitoring the HSE aspects of petroleum operations beyond 12 nautical miles, the Council notes that the Department of Labour has one safety inspector responsible for all seven offshore facilities, plus onshore petroleum and geothermal operations. "This is a significant under-resourcing situation of concern to this Council and the people of the region."

It also points to the department's record in hazardous substances and noxious organisms (HASNO) inspections. "At current inspection rates, each workplace in New Zealand will be inspected once every 30 years on average. This is not considered a good example

of a successful regulatory regime."

By comparison, the Council says it monitors 95%-plus of resource consents issued each year, recovers the cost from consent holders and takes appropriate action when non-compliance is found.

The Council says the Government's review of offshore environmental and health and safety is important but "should have been undertaken some time ago and should not have had to wait for Government reform or the Gulf of Mexico disaster to precipitate ...

"There is no doubt that major change is required and all concerned should work together towards positioning New Zealand so that a world-class, but cost-effective, regime can be established for the next 20-plus years."

The Council says it has experience in working alongside both industry and government agencies to achieve workable and effective outcomes.

'There is no doubt that major change is required...'

Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

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Brian Jeffares	0-6-765 7773
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MEETING SCHEDULE:

The Taranaki Regional Council and its committees meet on a six-week cycle. Meetings are held at the Council chamber, 47 Cloten Road, Stratford, unless otherwise stated.

Tuesday, 5 April, 10.30am:

Ordinary Council meeting

Tuesday, 26 April, 10.30am:

Consents and Regulatory Committee

Thursday, 28 April, 10.30am:

Policy and Planning Committee

Monday, 9 May, 10am:

Executive Committee

Monday, 9 May, 10.30am:

Ordinary Council meeting (to hear submissions on the Draft Annual Plan 2011/2012)

Thursday 12 May, 10.30am:

Taranaki Solid Waste Management Committee

Tuesday 17 May, 10.30am:

Ordinary Council meeting

For up-to-date information on meeting dates and times, and access to agendas and minutes, go to www.trc.govt.nz/meetings-calendar/



Garden Manager – Tupare, Mitch Graham, leads some of the 60 participants on a guided walk at Tupare in early January.

Gardens events prove popular

From fruit wine to paint mines, cold frames to freshwater crustaceans ... events at Taranaki's three Regional Gardens over summer had something for everyone and attracted good turnouts.

"Hollard Gardens, Pukeiti and Tupare's incredibly busy season of free events included garden workshops, guided walks, market days and more, and we were really pleased with the public response," says the Taranaki Regional Council's Regional Gardens Manager, Greg Rine.

"A Hollard Gardens workshop on vegetable gardening for all seasons drew 80 participants, while 60 people turned up for a guided walk at Tupare early in January."

Other events included market days at Tupare (with a presentation on fruit wine at the first), a workshop on pests in the city at Tupare, and a hands-on river ecology workshop at Pukeiti. "The latter brought around 30 people to Pukeiti on a very foggy day, ranging in age from three to 60-plus, and the feedback was very positive," says Mr Rine.

All three gardens were also included in the New Plymouth District Council's summer programme of guided walks, including an extended inspection of the tram lines and "paint mines" (mineral extraction pits) at Pukeiti.

The Taranaki Regional Council's programme of free events at Tupare, Pukeiti and Hollard Gardens continues throughout the year.

Upcoming events:

Tupare, Sunday 27 March, 2pm-4pm:
Container planting workshop

Learn the secrets of displaying plants in containers and hanging baskets and get ideas for unique creations in your own home. This workshop will focus on the tried and true tricks that ensure success with container planting at home.

Pukeiti, Sunday 3 April, 10.30am-2pm:
Explorer Club fun day

Celebrate Easter early. Answer the clues to find the Easter eggs. There will be fun sporting events and a sausage sizzle. Bring sunblock, hat and gummies.

Tupare, Saturday 9 April, 4pm-6pm:
Arts and Crafts architecture

Tour the Chapman-Taylor house and view the fine detailing and practical features of the construction, then hear about the philosophy behind its Arts and Crafts architecture.

Hollard Gardens, Sunday 17 April, 2pm-4pm: Lawn improvement workshop
Whether you have a pocket lawn in town or an expanse in the country, learn how to improve your lawn with NPDC turf expert Craig Hitchcock.

Hollard Gardens, Sunday 8 May, 2pm-4pm: Propagating ornamentals workshop
Autumn is the time to rejuvenate your garden. Learn how to take cuttings, divide and other methods of propagation suitable for this time of year.

Council in social media mix

Social media users can now follow news and information from the Taranaki Regional Council, the Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group and the three Regional Gardens.

The Council and Civil Defence have a presence on Twitter, while the Regional Gardens are on both Facebook and Twitter.

"Social media has evolved rapidly into an important source of news and information for many New Zealanders," says the Council's Director-Corporate Services, Mike Nield. "So it's appropriate to include them in the channels we use to communicate with the regional community."

The Council's Twitter page carries media releases, staff vacancies and other items of interest, including notifications of updates on the Council website.

The Civil Defence Twitter page carries news items relating to civil defence emergency management in the region, and also redistributes relevant and interesting material from other civil defence and allied agencies.

The Regional Gardens Twitter and Facebook pages carry information about public events and other happenings at Tupare, Pukeiti and Hollard Gardens.

"With their sensory and emotional appeal, the three Regional Gardens in particular seem a natural fit for social media, which is why we've got them on Facebook as well as Twitter," says Mr Nield. "It's early days yet and the number of people following these pages is still relatively modest, but a lot of Regional Gardens information is being picked up and redistributed by other social media users with much larger networks."

How to find us on social media:

Taranaki Regional Council --
@TaranakiIRC (Twitter)

Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group --
@TaranakiEM (Twitter)

Taranaki Regional Gardens --
@TaranakiIRG (Twitter) and

TaranakiRegionalGardens (Facebook).