

# Introduction

Like all regional councils in New Zealand, the Taranaki Regional Council monitors the overall state of the environment within the boundaries of its region. Not only is monitoring a requirement under the *Resource Management Act 1991* (RMA), it provides important feedback on how well the Council is promoting the sole purpose of the RMA—the sustainable management of Taranaki’s natural and physical resources.

## Purpose of the report

While the *State of the Environment Report 2015* considers environmental trends and changes over the past five to 20 years or more, its fundamental purpose is to provide an outlook to the future. Collating and analysing the large amount of data we collect in our daily work, and identifying trends in each aspect of the environment, help us answer questions about:

- ▷ the state of our natural and physical resources and the direction each aspect of the environment is heading
- ▷ the effectiveness of our policies and programmes in promoting sustainable management, both now and into the future
- ▷ the standard of environmental quality desired for Taranaki and whether any policy changes or improvements are required.

The purpose of this report is to provide high-quality, easily understood environmental information that is accessible to all. It is also a comprehensive and in-depth collation of the work that has been undertaken in the past five to 20 years, upon which sound resource management decisions can be based.

## Content of the report

The primary focus of the *State of the Environment Report 2015* is on the state of those aspects of the environment managed by the Taranaki Regional Council under the RMA.

However, the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki district councils have assisted with the content of the report by providing information on the environmental conditions and trends for which they are responsible. Other agencies or organisations such as the Department of Conservation have similarly assisted in this way. Dozens of businesses, industries, individuals and community groups have contributed information on their environmental work including information for case studies. Information provided from all such sources has been a valuable addition to the report, enabling the Council to present relevant and up-to-date information to the community. Those who have contributed are gratefully acknowledged at the beginning of the report.

Following the Introduction the report has nine chapters: Where we live, Land, Fresh water, Coast, Air, Biodiversity, Heritage and place, Waste, and Natural hazards.

## How the report is organised

Generally, each chapter of the report follows the Pressure-State-Response model widely adopted overseas in state of the environment reporting. With the exception of the introduction and chapter one, each chapter deals with a particular aspect of the environment and the natural and physical resources it encompasses. Each chapter begins with an introductory commentary, providing readers a broad context for that aspect of the environment, including how that aspect of the environment is valued and any significant pressures on natural or physical resources. The ‘What’s the story?’ sections detail the state of a particular aspect of the

environment, including analysis of the data collected as part of our monitoring programmes and, where applicable, information that has been provided to us from others. Lastly, each section outlines 'Our responses' in managing the resources within a particular aspect of the environment (including the responses of others), touching briefly on the future direction the management of resources is likely to take.

## Presentation of information

Since the *State of the Environment Report 2009*, the Council has had the benefit of another five years of data collection and analysis. In a number of cases data has now been collected over a relatively long time period—in some instances, almost 20 years. In almost all cases, we can know confidently that there is sufficient data to undertake statistically robust trend analysis.

### Presentation of data

Although this is not a technical report, the report is technically robust and has been subject to the most extensive independent peer review of any of our previous state of the environment reports. Where appropriate, each section has been scrutinised by an external specialist or expert in the field to ensure we have the best possible scientific accuracy and integrity. Each section has also been subject to one or more internal reviews to ensure the information is meaningful, accurate and informative.

The information presented is a collation of the data collected since our last report in 2009, up to and including the most recent data available. For some programmes and cycles of monitoring, the most recent complete data set available is up to 2013. In other cases, complete data is available up to 2014. The time period of each data set reported on is given in all sections.

Trend analysis can indicate with a high degree of certainty whether the data collected is showing an improvement, deterioration or no clear change. In all possible cases trend analysis has been presented. In some cases, such as where our monitoring programmes are new or have undergone changes in process or technology, there is not yet sufficient data to provide statistically robust trend analysis. These few cases have been identified and noted in the report.

In terms of interpreting trends, the Council tests both the certainty of a trend (questioning if the data really does show a trend that is statistically significant) and the scale of any change (whether the trend actually makes a difference). Both tests use recognised criteria.

Every attempt has been made to present the information in a form that is understandable to the community. Wherever possible, maps and diagrams have been used to demonstrate environmental conditions and trends. Case studies and examples of particular programmes are presented for added interest.





### Māori words and phrases

Assistance with the accuracy and correct usage of Te Reo Māori was received from Te Reo O Taranaki Charitable Trust. In considering the spelling of Māori words and place names that have long vowels, the report adopts the Māori orthographic conventions developed and promoted by Te Taura Whiri i te Reo Māori (2012): *Guidelines for Māori Language Orthography*. Dictionaries, historical documentation, Taranaki historians, research reports and the like have been referred to as credible sources of accurate spelling. In cases where a reference is unable to be sourced to accurately guide how a word or place name is spelt, the status quo has remained.

## How to find out more

In many cases the report presents summary information with a reference made to reports, reference material or databases containing more detailed information for those who wish to read further.

A 'Find out more' section included at the end of each section of a chapter lists references to further or more detailed information, including reports, references and other information referred to in the body of the report. Information is organised into the following categories with an associated symbol or icon:

-  This symbol indicates that further information (such as an additional report or detailed data) is available online, either on the Taranaki Regional Council website or another website. Click on the link or enter the URL to access further information.
-  This symbol indicates a reference publication such as a book or journal that is available to the public. You can use this reference in a library or other catalogue search to find the publication or journal listed.
-  For any further information, reports or for answers to any questions, simply call the Taranaki Regional Council and a qualified Council Officer will assist with further information.
-  Our motto is '*Working with people, caring for Taranaki*'. This symbol indicates a short video related to an aspect of the environment; for example real-life examples and stories of people in the community creating environmental success stories and other stories of interest.

## Contact us

The Council is happy to assist with any query or request for further information. If you wish to contact us you may do so by:

Phone: 06 765 7127 or 0800 736 222

Fax: 06 765 5097

Email: [publications@trc.govt.nz](mailto:publications@trc.govt.nz)

By writing to the Council at:

Taranaki Regional Council

Private Bag 713

Stratford 4332

Or by calling into the Council offices at 47 Cloten Road, Stratford.

### Find out more

 [Taranaki Regional Council profile tinyurl.com/TRC1i](https://www.tinyurl.com/TRC1i)