



Environmental Awards

2020



Working with people | caring for Taranaki





Environmental Awards



Welcome to the 2020 Taranaki Regional Council Environmental Awards.

This year's 17 awards are going to educators, students, kaitiaki, grassroots volunteers, farmers and businesspeople.

They are all tremendous examples of the Taranaki can-do attitude and highlight the innovation and practical environmentalism that's a strong part of the regional culture.

They are leaders in ecological restoration in the region and their achievements are worthy of celebration, contributing to maintaining and improving our healthy environment and biodiversity. We're a region of people who walk the talk. We see what needs to be done, and we get stuck in and do it. This is the spirit that makes the region what it is.

So congratulations to our winners, and to all the others out there working hard to make Taranaki an even better place.

The 17 awards this year take the total to 313 since the Council began the annual presentations in the 1990s.

David MacLeod, Taranaki Regional Council Chairman



Your regional councillors



PROGRAMME

- Mihi whakatau
- Welcome David MacLeod, TRC Chairman
- Presentation of awards
 - *Environmental action in education*
 - *Environmental leadership in land management*
 - *Environmental leadership in dairy farming*
- Interval
- Presentation of awards
 - *Environmental leadership in business*
 - *Environmental action in the community*

***Finger food and drinks will be served
at your table during the presentation***

AWARDS



Environmental action in education

- Auroa School
- Mimi School
- Ōpunake High School and
Ōpunake Loop Trail Trust



Environmental leadership in land management

- Aorere Farms - Ross and Grant Skilton
- Karawhaka Poultry
- Campbell and Jodene McCowan
- Nick and Conna Smith *Milkoad Limited*



Environmental Awards



Dairy for life

Environmental leadership in dairy farming

- Helms RJ Family Trust
- PKW Farms LP
- Vintage Farm Trust

Environmental leadership in business

- BTW Company
- Blake Cheer and Gareth Fraser



Environmental action in the community

- John David Dodunski
- Waitara Taiao
- Dave Watson



Environmental action in education

CATEGORY

SPONSOR: **Contact**

Our young people are the future of sustainability and biodiversity protection in Taranaki. And our schools play an important role by instilling good environmental values and involving students in actions that are making a real difference.



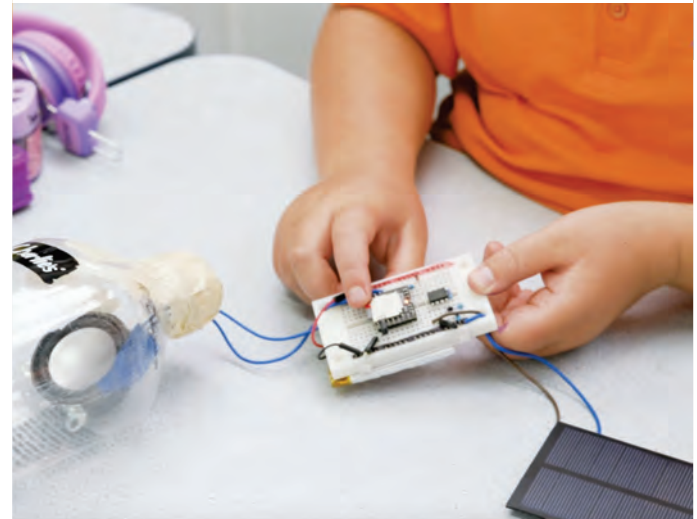
Auroa School

For outstanding effort developing innovative pest animal trapping technologies to improve trapping methods and practices.

Auroa School and its students have gone a step beyond taking a bull by the horns. They're taking the predator by the ears! They're developing innovative sound lures to make predator trapping more effective and efficient. The lures emit sounds designed to make predators curious. It's been an inexact science, with a limited possum lure already available. But led by deputy principal Myles Webb, the students are developing smart lures to also attract stoats, ferrets and rats at the most effective time for each. Their original aim was to protect whio on nearby Kaūpokonui Stream but their work is attracting nationwide interest, with trials across Taranaki and beyond. The project won initial support via the national Curious Minds citizen science platform.



Environmental action in education



Mimi School

For empowering students to take action to build a sustainable community through an amazing array of environmental projects.

Mimi School students are making a real difference in their local environment. They're actively involved in projects to protect and improve the environment throughout their popular but sensitive coastal home turf. And they're enriching their cultural understanding as well as their knowledge of science and nature.

They're monitoring water quality at the Mimitangiauta estuary, protecting kororā (little blue penguins) and shorebirds by trapping predators and erecting signs, planting dunes at Onaero Beach, replanting a stream gully on school grounds and running regular clean-up days at local beaches. Much of this work is in close collaboration with Ngāti Mutunga, giving students insights into kaitiakitanga. The estuary monitoring is part of an iwi-led project under the national Curious Minds citizen science platform.



Environmental action in education



Ōpunake High School & Ōpunake Loop Trail Trust

For incredible effort and enthusiasm for protecting and improving the local environment and inspiring others to take positive action.

The High School and the Trust are leading players in a massive environmental restoration project encircling Ōpunake and involving scores of townsfolk of all ages. The popular walking and cycling Loop Trail has been extended into a complete circuit, with volunteers from many groups busy planting 3,000 donated natives along its complete length. Their 10-year goal is 20,000 plants. High School students are building, and managing predator traps along its length of the track. The school's also donated 300 plants, and students have cut donated carpet into squares for weed suppression. This multi-generational project deepens residents' enjoyment of the environment and healthy living. It also reflects the High School's status as a Silver Enviroschool with a strong focus on sustainability.



Environmental action in education



Environmental leadership in land management

CATEGORY

SPONSOR: **Corteva Agriscience™**

Ensuring the land remains healthy and productive while protecting and enhancing native biodiversity is fundamental to sustainable land management. Our land management category winners show that responsible environmental stewardship can be achieved with the right balance of farming activities.



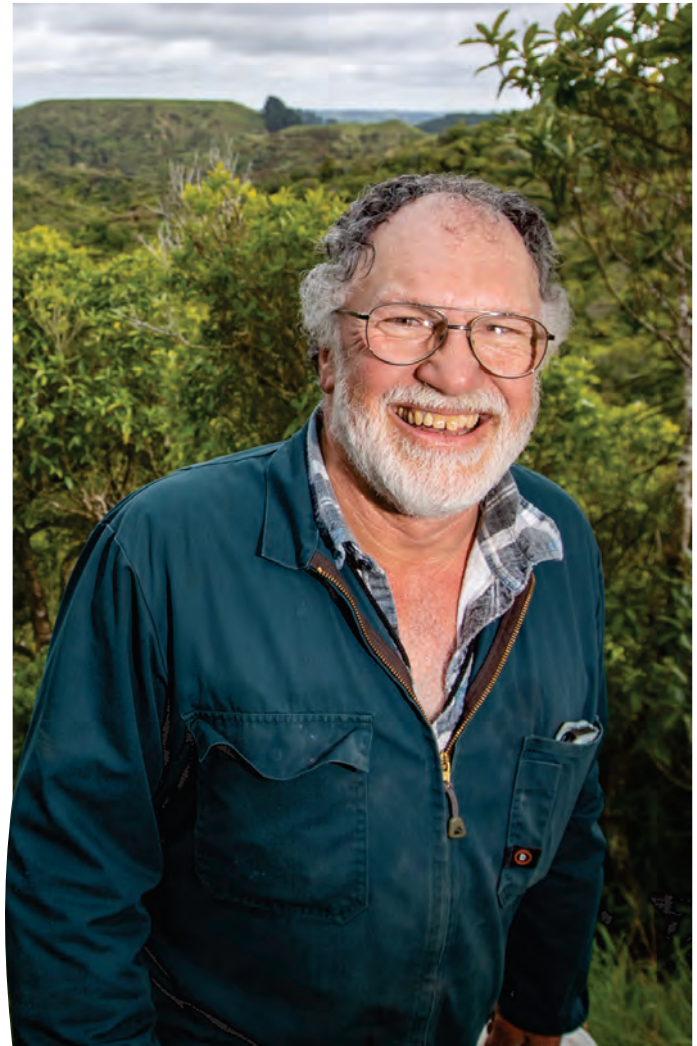
Aorere Farms *Ross & Grant Skilton*

For outstanding efforts to protect native flora and fauna through effective land management and the use of trapping technology.

Ross and Grant Skilton have North Island brown kiwi on their property, and they're working hard to ensure their survival. The iconic species have been detected in a 123 hectare native forest on their 307 hectare drystock and piggery unit in the Waitōtara catchment. Under their TRC Biodiversity Plan, they've covenanted the forest and are undertaking intensive predator control. It's challenging terrain, even for the high-tech traps they're using. Ross is working closely with the Council and trap-makers to iron out wrinkles. He's also reduced wild goat and pig numbers together with neighbouring landowners, and spreading the word about farming sustainably and looking after native biodiversity. To protect water quality, they've retired erosion-prone land to reduce sedimentation, all part of their TRC Comprehensive Farm Plan.



Environmental leadership in land management



Karawhaka Poultry

For going above and beyond to minimise environmental impacts through the use of sustainable business practices and improving the environment through the planting of native trees.

Chickens aren't the only birdlife on Nev and Maryanne Wells' Karawhaka Poultry farm at Lepperton. Native and exotic bird species are thriving as a result of an extensive planting effort, along with trapping to control rats, possums and stoats. The Wells wanted to completely screen the farm to reduce their environmental footprint. They've already paid for and planted 15,000 square metres, with another 10,000 planned. They're amazed at the burgeoning birdlife, and the reduction in dust. The trees will also create corridors between existing stands of native bush on the wider farm. Community and youth groups are helping with the plantings as a fundraiser. The Wells have also installed a new bund system to better manage stormwater and wash-down water.



Environmental leadership in land management



Campbell & Jodene McCowan

For outstanding effort protecting and improving the environment through sustainable land management and farming practices.

Steep slopes, high rainfall and erodible soils may seem considerable challenges, but sustainable and profitable farming is still possible. Campbell and Jodene McCowan work hard to achieve it on their 118 hectare frontal hill-country farm at Huiroa, inland from Stratford. By using their TRC Farm Plan and with assistance via the STRESS erosion scheme, the McCowans are reducing threats to water quality from soil erosion and flooding. They're planting scores of poplar and willow poles to hold soil, fencing and retiring some steeper land, with some pine establishment. And they actively manage stock and pasture use to minimise pugging. As well as protecting the environment, these measures offer options to diversify income and allow their land to be more productive.



Environmental leadership in land management



Nick and Conna Smith

For outstanding effort protecting and improving the environment through sustainable land management and farming practices.

Nick and Conna Smith made the environment an important priority when they took over a 171 hectare terrace-hillcountry block east of Waverley to run in conjunction with the family dairy farm at Pātea. They picked up a pre-existing TRC Farm Plan for the property and two years later it's all but complete. With support from the STRESS erosion scheme they've erected 1,500 metres of fences to retire 84 hectares of native bush, 29 hectares of reversion and 4.8 hectares of pine forestry on highly-erodible land. They've also stabilised soil in the easier hillcountry land by planting 100 poplar and willow poles. These allow grazing to continue but reduce the risk of eroded sediment contaminating waterways and making floods more likely. The pines diversify their income.



Environmental leadership in land management



Environmental leadership in dairy farming

CATEGORY

SPONSOR: **Fonterra**

Taranaki's dairy farmers contribute much to our healthy environment and thriving economy. Our dairy farming category winners demonstrate the leadership and significant investment that our region is making with the voluntary fencing and planting of streambanks, protecting water quality and biodiversity and a strong commitment to sustainable farming practices.



Dairy for life

Helms RJ Family Trust

For environmental stewardship and improving ecosystem health through riparian, wetland and native habitat enhancement.

Streamside fencing and planting is major focus for all the family on Rohin Helms' 135 hectare dairy farm milking 260 cows on the outskirts of Rāhotu, with a 35ha runoff just out of Egmont Village. The whole family are all heavily involved and jointly responsible for the planting programme. They all own it. It's a long-term project that's getting good results. Around 5.7 kilometres of streambank has already been protected, helping to improve water quality in the Pungaereere, Waitaha and Waiwhakaiho catchments. Fencing and planting riparian margins keeps stock out of waterways, cuts down run-off and encourages native biodiversity. The Helms also dispose of effluent to land on a large scale, and have carried out regenerative planting on the farm.



Environmental leadership in dairy farming



PKW Farms LP

For proactively minimising environmental risk and improving environmental performance through sustainable farming practices.

The environment is a key part of PKW Farms' commitment to deliver on the long-term aspirations of its owners and future generations. Milking 7,000 cows across 13 dairy units, it has kaitiakitanga among its four core values. A Kaitiakitanga Strategy sets out a pathway that includes sustained commitment to streamside fencing and planting, retiring wetland areas, heavy investment in effluent systems, strict management of nutrient use and even its own water-quality testing regime. It's already reduced water use by millions of litres a year, and is working through the final stages of its riparian management plans. Attention is now turning to wetlands and Key Native Ecosystems. All shareholders and stakeholders are given clear messages on the importance of this work.



Environmental leadership in dairy farming



Vintage Farm Trust

For developing innovative technologies to improve water quality, soil and ecosystem health.

Dairy farmer Allan Marx is truly a grassroots environmentalist. He carefully selects his pasture species to ensure the soil stays healthy and nutrient leaching risks are reduced. And using new technology to apply liquid fertiliser, he's halved his use of conventional fertiliser while still growing high-quality grass. Allan's also fenced and planted nearly five kilometres of streambank, with only about 500 metres remaining. This makes an outstanding contribution to water quality. His plantings include an impressive stand of kauri, tōtara, rimu and other native species. The 127 hectare farm west of Ngāere is also notable for its older, well-maintained machinery – reflecting Allan's commitment to 'reduce, reuse, recycle'. His environmental commitment is evident in techniques and equipment across all aspects of farm operations.



Environmental leadership in dairy farming



Environmental leadership in business

CATEGORY

Kaitiakitanga and a commitment to environmental best practice and efficiency are at the core of a sustainable business. Our winners in the Environmental leadership in business category are leaders in demonstrate how innovation and a team approach can pay worthwhile environmental and economic dividends.

BTW Company

For showing outstanding leadership within the business community towards pest control efforts and innovation on Taranaki maunga.

BTW Company and its staff are putting their time and expertise into iconic conservation projects in Taranaki and further afield. As part of BTW's health and wellness programme, staff volunteer for The Mouna Project, regularly checking and clearing a five-kilometre line of 57 stoat traps high on Mount Taranaki. Now into the third year, their efforts and traps protect an area where Taranaki Kiwi Trust has already released 18 kiwi. Alongside this work, The Mouna Project's kākā release programme will benefit from a BTW designed mobile kitset aviary. Erected at release sites, the aviary lets the birds acclimatise to their new surroundings before flying into the wild. It's currently in use at Abel Tasman National Park.



Environmental leadership in business



Blake Cheer & Gareth Fraser

For efforts to enhance farming practices through collaboration with the farming community for the protection of the environment.

Blake and Gareth are helping dairy farmers across Taranaki make the environment a central part of their everyday business activities. The pair are instrumental in the roll-out of Tiaki Farm Environment Plans for Fonterra suppliers. These cover all aspects including fertiliser use, effluent, waterway protection, biodiversity and other considerations. Each farmer gets a tailored plan setting out their property's risk areas, current farm practices and practical steps to achieve good practice. The plans are living documents, to be consulted frequently and updated regularly to encompass changes in technology, expectations and regulations. Blake and Gareth provide personalised service of a high standard, reflecting their own commitment to the environment. Farmers say it's like having their very own environmental consultant.



Environmental leadership in business



Environmental action in the community

CATEGORY

SPONSOR: **Methanex**

Taranaki has a strong community spirit, and the wealth of projects that help secure the future of our environment and native biodiversity are often built on thousands of volunteer hours.

Our community category winners illustrate what can be achieved by such commitment, and the value of the huge efforts made in our community.



John David Dodunski

For outstanding effort to protect and restore native biodiversity - and in particular New Zealand's native orchids - through pest plant control.

Wandering willie has no chance up against John Dodunski, New Plymouth's defender of fragile native orchids. He's made outstanding progress controlling the invasive South American pest plant, whose proper name is *Tradescantia*. It's a major threat to native orchid species, which John has spent a lifetime studying and observing. He's made a sustained effort to control *Tradescantia* over a large area within the Te Hēnui catchment in urban New Plymouth, making habitats safer for orchids and other native species. Hand-pulling is John's only option, and all this hard work has gone largely unnoticed until now. Not surprisingly, John is a strong supporter of biological control of *Tradescantia* with fungus and beetle species. The technique is used by TRC in this region.



Environmental action in the community



Waitara Taiao

For outstanding advocacy and voluntary effort to protect and restore native biodiversity and te taiao o Waitara.

Waitara Taiao shows how much can be achieved when a community develops and owns a conservation project. From small beginnings under local couple Tama and Gina Blackburn and their son Epiha, it's grown into an effective and valuable predator control operation involving people throughout the town and its surrounds. At last count, Waitara Taiao members were running 187 traps that within a couple of years had seen the removal of 358 predators, mainly rats and possums. They've also carried out restoration planting in reserves and along the Waitara River. Waitara Taiao is actively supported by iwi, schools, businesses, whānau and the Scout Group in the town. It's an especially popular cause among young people, with some quickly becoming highly skilled trappers!



Environmental action in the community



Dave Watson

For outstanding voluntary effort to protect and restore native biodiversity through pest animal control.

Many users of the Huatoki and Te Hēnui streamside tracks in urban New Plymouth will have met Dave Watson already. He's the guy who checks, clears and resets all the rat traps, accompanied by his springer spaniel Toby. He volunteered for the job last year to support Towards Predator-Free Taranaki. Since then, he's overseen the elimination of hundreds of predators and led effective community ownership of the 80 or so TRC traps, even filling in gaps with his own rat and possum traps when he sees a need. As predator numbers decrease, native species are thriving. This is confirmed in formal surveys as well as anecdotal evidence. Dave is also an enthusiastic ambassador for the project, spreading the word among track users.




Environmental action in the community





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