

Conservation Plans

Introduction

Most farmers have concerns about land sustainability on particular parts of their properties. It may be that a farmer needs advice on how to stabilise a sand blow in pasture near the coast; or how to establish shelter in a windswept paddock on the ring plain; or how to prevent a steep face from eroding on a hill country farm.

The Taranaki Regional Council advocates fixing these problems on the farm before they turn into big ones, or start to have off-site effects.

Purpose of a conservation plan

Conservation plans are formulated by the Regional Council in conjunction with individual landowners, to deal with site-specific problems that do not require longer-term input and planning activity.

Land management issues that may be tackled in a conservation plan include:

- Hillslope stabilisation
- Gully erosion control
- Sand stabilisation
- Farm track protection
- Farm shelter
- Wetland conservation

The plan is supplied on a no-cost basis, because the Council believes it is a co-operative way to help landowners move towards more sustainable use of their land and better protection of the region's environment.

Contents of a conservation plan

A typical conservation plan contains:

Description of property - after a brief summary of tenure, size and location, describes landforms, soils and vegetation on the farm.

Objective of plan - states what the problem is e.g. slips on a steep hillside; an active gully; an eroding streambank; a washed-out vehicle track; a sand blow. Other things conservation plans tackle are not so much problems, as improvements - shelter for an exposed paddock, improving stock water supply, restoring a degraded wetland.



A conservation plan may include track protection works.

Design - outlines design of the proposed solution e.g. spaced poplar planting on the hillside; pair or close planting of trees up the gully; fencing the streambank and revegetating it with natives; re-aligning the vehicle track at a stable grade with better drainage; de-stocking the sandblow and planting it with marram.

Examples of improvements are planting a two-tier windbreak (timber trees with shrub under-storey) along the windy paddock's edge, gravity-feeding water into new stock-ponds or troughs on stable sites, restoring the wetland's water table and fencing it to protect remnant vegetation from stock.

Layout of the proposed works is usually depicted on a map or aerial photograph bound into the plan.

Estimate of costs - provides cost for each element in the five-year works programme.

Implementation - recommends a schedule for implementing each stage, year-by-year.

How to do it - technical advice e.g. choice of species, when and how to plant, and post-planting maintenance. This is appended as information sheets about each topic.

Recording progress - a form for keeping track of the conservation plan's implementation. It includes date, location and extent of plantings or other works; together with notes on any problems encountered that need to be fixed by follow-up work.