



The Minister for the Environment, the Hon Dr Nick Smith, and Taranaki Regional Council Chairman David MacLeod at the launch of Taranaki as One - Taranaki Tāngata Tū Tahī.

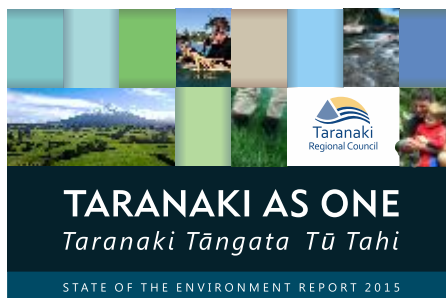
Region can be proud

Taranaki's latest five-yearly state of the environment report shows great progress is being made and proves just how seriously everyone in the region takes environmental issues, the authors say.

The report, Taranaki as One - Taranaki Tāngata Tū Tahī, says the region enjoys a generally good and improving environment thanks largely to hard work and serious investment across all sectors.

The report has been launched by the Minister for the Environment, the Hon Dr Nick Smith. It is the fourth produced by the Taranaki Regional Council and is available online at www.trc.govt.nz.

"Taranaki can be proud of itself," Council Chairman David MacLeod says of the report's



findings. "Challenges remain, of course. But based on the findings of this report, including its countless examples of Taranaki's 'get on and do it' attitude, we can be confident about the future."

He says three trends in particular stand out:

- More hard investment in the environment across the board.

- Greater community engagement in the environment - more people voluntarily doing more.
- More regulatory and non-regulatory measures by both local and central government to promote environmental protection and enhancement.

"Against this backdrop, we're seeing hugely encouraging results," says Mr MacLeod. "And this is a comprehensive report, backed up by two decades of environmental monitoring data and robust science that has been peer-reviewed."

The report's findings include:

- Trends in both the ecological health and the physical and chemical state of the

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INSIDE: State of the environment report at a glance: Pages 3-6

TARANAKI AS ONE

Taranaki Tāngata Tū Tahī

STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT 2015



Cr DAVID LEAN
(New Plymouth)
Deputy Chairman



Cr TOM CLOKE
(New Plymouth)



Cr PETER HORTON
(New Plymouth)



Cr MOIRA ARMSTRONG
(New Plymouth)



Cr CRAIG WILLIAMSON
(New Plymouth)



Cr BRIAN JEFFARES
(Stratford)



Cr MIKE DAVEY
(North Taranaki)



Cr ROGER MAXWELL
(North Taranaki)



Cr MICHAEL JOYCE
(South Taranaki)



Cr NEIL WALKER
(South Taranaki)

Major report puts team in the spotlight

Publication of our major five-yearly State of the Environment Report is a big day for the Taranaki Regional Council, and not least for our team of 11 elected Councillors.



From
the
Chair

The report underscores the depth and breadth of this Council's environmental management work, particularly with the core resources of land, fresh water, coast and air.

The Council sets, monitors and enforces plans and rules governing the quality and use of these four core resources region-wide, primarily through our over-arching Regional

Policy Statement and the individual Regional Plans for each resource. These are weighty statutory documents that must periodically undergo comprehensive review, in consultation with the community. The state of the environment report is an invaluable tool in this work.

The Council also has a major role in protecting and enhancing indigenous biodiversity, both by setting and enforcing regulations for control of pest plants and animals, and by supporting and funding community efforts in this field.

In fact, the Council's work goes far beyond setting and enforcing rules. We run many voluntary programmes aimed at sustainable

resource use, getting alongside farmers, landowners, industry, community groups and individuals.

Our other responsibilities include Civil Defence and flood control, and transport planning and the provision of public transport. On behalf of the regional community we own Port Taranaki Ltd and Yarrow Stadium, and we own and administer Pukeiti, Hollard Gardens and Tupare, heritage properties of national and international repute.

So your Regional Councillors find themselves dealing with many and varied issues. And we're always open to your feedback. See Page 7 of ReCount for our contact details.

David MacLeod - CHAIRMAN

Environmental effort does region proud

From Page 1

region's waterways are the best ever recorded.

- The region's land, air and coast are also in good or excellent shape.
- The world-class riparian management programme is on track for completion at the end of the decade, with more than 3.6 million plants supplied to date for streamside planting on the ring plain.
- An increasingly co-ordinated and co-operative approach to protecting and enhancing native biodiversity by community groups and agencies in the region. The Council has led the charge with a \$1.2 million biodiversity spend in 2013/14.

The report also covers heritage, landscape and amenity, where it finds a progressive community outlook ensures that values are being maintained; solid waste management,

where it finds that the focus now is firmly on minimisation because the environmental effects of disposal have been addressed; and natural hazards, where it finds that the region is generally well prepared for large-scale events.

The report draws on information compiled and supplied by the New Plymouth, Stratford and South Taranaki District Councils, the Department of Conservation and many other agencies and community groups.

"This takes us back to a key theme reflected in the report's title, Taranaki as One - Taranaki Tāngata Tū Tahī," says Mr MacLeod. "A whole range of agencies and individuals are involved in managing the environment."

He says, however, that the region can't rest on its laurels despite the generally positive tone of the report. "The community has high

and growing expectations and aspirations around the quality of our waterways, for example," he says.

"Protecting and further enhancing our freshwater resource will effectively 'future-proof' the region, ensuring Taranaki can continue to offer economic opportunities and enviable lifestyles to the children and grandchildren of today's citizens."

The Council has prepared a Draft Freshwater and Land Management Plan under which it proposes to lock in completion of the Riparian Management Programme, and to ensure that farm dairy effluent is discharged to land rather than waterways wherever possible.

Formal public consultation on the Draft Plan will take place late this year.

To read Taranaki as One - Taranaki Tāngata Tū Tahī in full, go to www.trc.govt.nz.

At a glance

PEOPLE AND ECONOMY



Taranaki's population was

109,609

at the 2013 census—a 5.3% increase since the 2006 Census. The region has not experienced the population pressures of other regions.

Dairying in Taranaki is well-established and stable, in contrast to widespread dairy conversions in other regions. This region's milking cow numbers have changed little over the past 15 years and at 493,361, account for 10% of the national herd—down from nearly 15% in 1998/1999.

Tourism plays an important role in the economy.



The oil and gas industry has a long association with the region since the first wells were established in the 1860s. It has seen the greatest increase in employment growth in the region in the past decade, and it is New Zealand's fourth largest export earner.



Taranaki's GDP is the highest per capita in the country and is driven by the oil and gas, and agricultural industries.

\$80,297



GDP per capita Taranaki

\$51,319



GDP per capita NZ average

What's the story?



LAND

Of the most at-risk land
65% of privately-owned land has a farm plan.

81% of samples meet target ranges for soil health.

Some results indicate an increase in soil compaction.

99.5%

of dairy farms have riparian plans.

Council has facilitated supply of more than

3.6 million

plants to landowners.



92%

of land is sustainably managed.





FRESH WATER



Good quality groundwater across all sites monitored.

Best-ever long term trends in physicochemical and ecological health.

Over the past 18 years ecological health has improved at 44 sites monitored with no significant deterioration at any site.



Nitrate concentrations in Taranaki groundwater have remained stable. In 2011/2012, 96% of samples were within Drinking-water Standards for NZ.



80%

of streambanks in the programme are fenced and **65%** are protected with vegetation.

In summer 2013/2014

91%

of samples taken from freshwater swimming spots were within MfE guidelines.

The majority of sites monitored in Taranaki meet NIWA guidelines for most water uses, most of the time.



Improving ecological trends at 14 sites have become highly significant since 2007.

Water allocated for use in the region is low—only

4%

of the total allocation.

The Council's riparian programme is the largest environmental enhancement planting scheme on privately-owned land in NZ.



The coast has a rich cultural history and quality of marine waters continues to improve.

COAST



Major discharges to coastal waters have reduced from 25 to

3

since the 1970s.



In the past six years

95%

of sites sampled at popular swimming spots were within MfE guidelines for swimming.

AIR



80%

of nitrogen oxide results in 'Excellent' category.

Natural sand accumulation impacts rocky shore ecology.



Survey results from 2008 to 2014 showed concentrations of metals and faecal coliform in shellfish were well below guidelines.

97%

air particle (PM₁₀) monitoring results in 'Good' or 'Excellent' category.

Low levels of carbon monoxide even in 'worst-case scenario' areas.



National air quality standards have never been exceeded in Taranaki.



BIODIVERSITY



Taranaki's biological diversity and unique species are important taonga.

Taranaki has **151,054** hectares

formally protected by the Department of Conservation (DOC) or under a QEII or DOC covenant—up from 145,000 hectares in 2008. 31 new QEII covenants were registered in Taranaki in 2014—the largest number for any region.

Taranaki community groups and agencies collaborate closely to protect and enhance the region's indigenous biodiversity. The recently established Taranaki Biodiversity Trust has 19 groups and agencies as founding members.



4,374

properties in the Self-help Possum Control Programme—the largest participation in NZ.

There has been a small (1.3%) loss of wetland area between 2007 and 2012—but the annual rate of wetland area loss has reduced by 60%.

The condition of remaining wetlands is improving under the Council's programmes. 72% of wetlands covered by Council-developed biodiversity plans showed improvement in overall condition between 2010 and 2015, compared with 31% of wetlands without a plan.



178

sites covering 119,103 hectares are classed as Key Native Ecosystems.

The Council has increased its biodiversity budget to **\$1.2million** (2013/2014).

Councils continue to invest in developing community facilities, for example the Brougham Street shared space and the Len Lye Centre in New Plymouth, the Hāwera Town Centre Revitalisation Strategy and development of the King Edward sporting area in Stratford.



Taranaki's heritage, landscape and other qualities make this a special place to live.

90% satisfied with formal and informal public access to rivers, lakes and coast in the region.

The Taranaki Regional Council has made significant investments in the internationally recognised Pukeiti Gardens since taking over ownership in 2010.

1140 heritage buildings and items identified by Taranaki's district councils.



HERITAGE AND PLACE

NATURAL HAZARDS



\$3 million

upgrade to Waitara's flood protection to future-proof the town.

Taranaki is readying itself for future challenges from extreme climatic and geological events.

More than 90% approval rating for living environment, parks and reserves and access to natural environment in the New Plymouth District Council area and high ratings on similar measures within Stratford and South Taranaki districts.



Potential hazards include volcanic eruption, earthquakes, floods, high winds, drought and landslips.

Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group plans and prepares for emergencies.

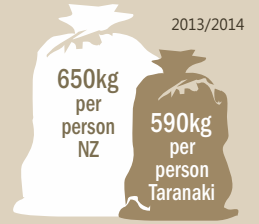




WASTE

2 farm plastics recycling programmes operating in Taranaki.

Waste disposal in Taranaki is not increasing as rapidly as it is nationally, despite the region leading New Zealand in economic growth.



Only **1** well-regulated landfill for all of the region.

The region has a firm focus on minimising waste.



More being recycled through district council kerbside collections and facilities.



Dedicated centres for e-waste collection in three districts.

OUR RESPONSES... *continuing the momentum*



Business and Economic Research Limited (BERL) estimates that the Taranaki community has invested \$260 million in environmental improvements over the 2008–2014 period and has spent \$117 million per year on capital and annual operating costs. This is an increase from \$85 million per year in 2002–2007.

The review of the Council's Regional Fresh Water and Soil plans in 2015/2016 will see changes made to the management of farm dairy effluent. As a general rule, all farm dairy effluent will be required to be discharged to land.



The investments made in surface water quality have more than doubled over 2008–2014 compared with 2002–2007. District councils have invested heavily in this area.

The review of the Council's Regional Fresh Water and Soil plans will lock in completion of the Riparian Management Programme, requiring streambanks to be fenced and planted by 1 July 2020.



The Council undertakes regular reviews of all of its policies, programmes and activities and this is continuing with reviews of the Regional Fresh Water and Soil plans, the Regional Coastal Plan, Biodiversity Strategy and pest management strategies.



The Council has significantly ramped up its efforts in biodiversity over the past seven years and there will be more happening in this area in future.



Flagship awards gain an extra dimension

Taranaki's flagship Environmental Awards are back for 2015, with regional iwi adding an extra dimension by sponsoring one of the award categories.

Ngāruahine, Ngāti Ruanui, Te Ātiawa, Taranaki and Ngāti Mutunga are jointly sponsoring Te taiao me te pākihi – Environmental leadership in business, one of five categories in the annual awards presented by the Taranaki Regional Council.

Other categories are Environmental leadership in dairy farming, sponsored by Fonterra; Environmental leadership in land management, sponsored by Dow AgroSciences; Environmental action in the community, sponsored by Methanex; and Environmental action in education, sponsored by Taranaki Daily News.

Nominations are open until 25 August and can be made online via the Council website at www.trc.govt.nz/environmental-awards/. The awards will be presented in late October.

"We're delighted that five iwi are joining with us and the other sponsors to celebrate

environmental achievement in the region," says the Taranaki Regional Council Chairman, David MacLeod. "Their involvement can only deepen the significance and impact of these annual awards."

The awards were inaugurated in 1993, with 219 presented so far.

Mr MacLeod says the Council's latest five-yearly State of the Environment report highlights the tremendous effort put into environmental protection and enhancement by all sectors in Taranaki, and the awards are a fitting way to recognise such efforts.

"Our award winners are always great examples of the Taranaki 'get on and do it' attitude that is reflected in the results seen in the State of the Environment report: The region enjoys a generally good and improving environment."

The Environmental Awards were revamped two years ago to allow greater recognition at a higher-profile presentation ceremony. As well as bringing sponsors on board, the new-look awards have more categories and a clearer focus on why awards are made.

Council leaves rates unchanged

The Taranaki Regional Council adopted its Long-Term Plan 2015/2025 with essentially no change to rates in the new financial year while work programmes are maintained or enhanced.

The 2015/2016 year will see a decrease of \$30,414, or a little over a third of 1%, in the Council's total rates take (the combination of general rates, targeted rates and uniform annual charge), and an increase of just under 1% in the general rates take. In subsequent years, general rate increases below the rate of inflation are planned.



"This Long-Term Plan is firmly focused on resources, environment and people, which are at the core of our work," says the Council Chairman, David MacLeod.

"And it's pleasing to be able to maintain our status as one of the lowest-rating Councils in New Zealand while still maintaining a high standard of programmes and services."

He says a busy programme of work is planned in the coming year and beyond as the Council seeks to build on previous achievements and successes.

"The Council is committed to its core mission, which is working with people and caring for Taranaki," says Mr MacLeod.

Taranaki Regional Council Facts File

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Facebook:	TaranakiCivilDefence TaranakiRegionalGardens
Environmental hotline:	0800 736 222
Civil Defence freephone:	0800 900 049
NP bus information:	0800 827 287

REGIONAL COUNCILLORS

New Plymouth Constituency:

Tom Cloke	06 753 5586
Peter Horton	06 758 8011
Moiria Irving	021 944 809
David Lean	06 753 3325
Craig Williamson	027 687 4122

North Taranaki Constituency:

Mike Davey	06 756 7126
Roger Maxwell	06 752 3622

South Taranaki Constituency:

Michael Joyce	06 274 5800
David MacLeod (Chair)	06 278 5577
Neil Walker	06 278 7541

Stratford Constituency:

Brian Jeffares	06 765 7773
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MEETING SCHEDULE

Meetings are held at the Council chamber, 47 Cloten Road, Stratford, unless otherwise stated.

Tuesday 21 July, 10.30am: Consents and Regulatory Committee.

Thursday 23 July, 10.30am: Policy and Planning Committee.

Monday 3 August, 10am: Executive Committee.

Tuesday 11 August, 10.30am: Ordinary Council meeting.

Thursday 27 August, 10.30am: Solid Waste Management Committee.

For meeting dates:

www.trc.govt.nz/meetings-calendar/

For agendas and minutes:

www.trc.govt.nz/agendas-and-minutes/

Region on emergency footing

The township of Waitotara was inundated and many rural households were left isolated after intense rainfall on 19 and 20 June resulted in widespread flooding and slips and severe disruptions to roading and electricity networks throughout Taranaki. A Civil Defence State Of Emergency was declared at 9pm on Saturday 20 June, and remained in place for a week.

The heaviest rain was in inland South Taranaki but throughout the region, about 60 local roads were blocked by slips and washouts and in at least one case, repairs are expected to take weeks.

Personnel making an aerial inspection of Waitotara Valley Road, for example, stopped counting the slips after seeing 35.

The State Highway network was also disrupted, with access to the region completely blocked at one point.

The damage to local roads hindered repairs to the electricity network, which in places was also severely damaged. The lines company Powerco says power poles and transformers were submerged under water and slips took out whole sections of lines.

Taranaki Civil Defence co-ordinated relief flights by helicopters over the following week to deliver food and essential items to remote households that remained cut off and in some cases without electricity.

The Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group Controller David Lean says many people, agencies and organisations stepped up to help with the emergency response.

“I’d like to thank each and every one of you. It was a great effort and yet another example of the way we roll up our sleeves and get things done in Taranaki.”

Mr Lean says the focus now is on sustainable long-term support and assistance for those whose lives and businesses were disrupted by flooding and slips.

“It is likely to take some time for the situation to fully return to normal. Taranaki Civil Defence, the region’s Councils and many other agencies will continue to support the clean-up and recovery of those affected by the floods,” says Mr Lean.

The Taranaki Civil Defence Emergency Management Group is made up of the region’s four Councils.



Taranaki Civil Defence co-ordinated helicopter missions to take essential supplies to those isolated by slips.

Stopbanks do the job at Waitara

The Waitara flood protection scheme coped relatively easily against the heavy rainfall event on the weekend of 20 June.

“At its highest, the river level in Waitara on 20 June was a one-in-16-year flow,” says the Council Chief Executive Basil Chamberlain.

“This was a moderate flow, rather than a large flood in Waitara, and a relatively minor test for the protection works. The upgrade is in its final stages to protect the town from a one-in-100-year standard,” he said.

Mr Chamberlain says the value of the Waitara upgrade, and the earlier Lower Waiwhakaiho upgrade to a similar 100-year standard, can be measured from the flooding in Whanganui during the same event.

Its stopbanks, which were recently upgraded to an inadequate one-in-50-year standard, were overwhelmed by a one-in-85-year flood. Consequences of that decision were costly.

“The \$3 million upgrade project to boost Waitara’s flood protection is designed to protect the town from such damage. The Council is determined to see the upgrade completed to the highest reasonable standard and to be as resilient as possible.

“A one-in-100-year flow is estimated at

around 3,800 cubic metres per second which is more than twice the highest flow measured at 1,640 cubic metres on 20 June. A one-in-100-year flood would be about three metres higher, with a substantially higher flow velocity.

“This is the context in which the decision had to be made to remove some pohutukawa trees as part of the upgrade. To cope with the very fast-moving floodwaters that a one-in-100-year event would bring, the bank at that location needs to be resloped and benched, and the rock protection rebuilt.

“While the trees afforded some degree of protection erosion, in this particular case it was not enough for the scale of flood the upgraded scheme is designed to withstand.

“The Council is determined that the Waitara flood scheme copes at its optimum design level. Really large floods would devastate the township if the defences fail.

“We’ve made big investments in flood protection at Waitara and the Lower Waiwhakaiho, and it’s clear that these were the right decisions. The Council is absolutely committed to giving the Waitara people and businesses the level of flood protection they deserve,” says Mr Chamberlain.



The swollen Waitara River at the Town Bridge on Saturday 20 June.