

## New Northland Regional Council CEO appointed



Malcolm Nicolson

Far North Holdings Limited Chief Executive and Kawakawa resident Malcolm Nicolson has been appointed as the Northland Regional Council's new Chief Executive Officer.

Malcolm, 54, was chosen from a field of 38 candidates to replace Ken Paterson, who left the council in July to head the Tauranga City Council.

Malcolm holds Bachelor of Commerce and Master of Business Administration degrees. For the past 12 years he has headed Far North Holdings Limited (FNHL), which was set up by the Far North District Council in 1997 to handle its commercial activities.

He served as FNHL's Executive Chairman from 1999 to 2008 and was appointed to his current position in June 2008.

Malcolm will lead the council's 140-plus staff from January 23 next year. Council Operations Director and Deputy CEO Tony Phipps will continue to fill in as Acting CEO until Malcolm assumes his role.

Malcolm was born in South Africa and has lived in New Zealand since 1996. He is married with two adult children.

"I am passionate about unlocking the immense reservoir of opportunity that exists in Northland and look forward to being able to continue serving the diverse communities of the region through this new role," he says.

Regional council Chairman Craig Brown says the council's role has broadened in recent years to include stronger focus on economic matters. Malcolm brings welcome experience and expertise in this area.

Craig says he and his fellow councillors are appreciative of staff efforts in the several months since Ken's departure, and in particular Tony Phipps in his role as Acting CEO.

## CHRISTMAS HOURS

All Northland Regional Council offices will be closed from 2pm Friday 23 December until 8am Wednesday 4 January 2012 for the Christmas-New Year holiday break.

The closures apply to the council's head office in Water St, Whāngārei and its offices in Kaitiāia, Ōpua and Dargaville.

The 24/7 freephone Environmental Hotline **0800 504 639** will still be available for people to report environmental or maritime incidents during the holidays.

Maritime, environmental response and hydrological staff will remain on call during the break and the council's annual summer swimming water quality monitoring programme will also continue. Results are posted weekly on the regional council's website: [www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming)

**Councillors, management and staff wish all Northlanders and visitors to the region a Merry Christmas and a safe and happy New Year.**

# REGIONAL REPORT

Issue 22

your regional newsletter  
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Boat builder Perrin Clark (left) has 20 years experience building custom-designed aluminium boats. He and Regional Harbourmaster Jim Lyle are happy to show off the new council vessel.

## NEW BOAT FOR PATROL

A new Northland-built workboat will be helping to keep the region's waters safe this summer. The yet-to-be-named aluminium vessel, currently under construction in Ōpua, will soon take over from the aging 'Gemini', which has served the region well for 25 years.

The Northland Regional Council's Regional Harbourmaster, Jim Lyle, says the 5.8 metre boat will be used by maritime staff to patrol Northland's coastline, aid navigation maintenance, provide Navigation Safety Bylaw advice, and transport for the council's coastal and water quality teams.

"The boat is out on the water most days during the summer, whether that's for patrols, water quality monitoring work carried out by regional council staff, or to service buoys and beacons around the region," he says.

Due to be launched soon for the start of the summer holiday season, the boat is being built by Northland Spars and Rigging 2009 Ltd, which won the \$98,000 tender against a number of national and international competitors.

The boat has a catamaran-style hull and is fabricated from aluminium. It joins the council's two other workboats and 16 metre pilot boat, 'Waikare', all of which are on call for oil spill response and recovery.

"The boats cover the whole of the north, from the largest harbour in the Southern Hemisphere (the Kaipara), Hokianga, Pārengarenga and down to Mangawhai – both east and west coasts," says Jim.

"This is a very large coastline. Given the volume of vessels on our waters, particularly during the summer holidays, and regular commercial vessel traffic, it's important we maintain a high standard of reliable boats."

All crew have commercial inshore launch master qualifications and are very experienced, the longest-serving being Peter Dodds, who has been on Northland's waters for more than 30 years.

The team attends a number of oil recovery responses throughout the year from reports of small bilge overflows to at least one larger launch that's in trouble, every year.

"Bilge overflows are fairly common, so people should keep their bilges clean, and fix leaks to try and prevent them."

"We do attend several launches in trouble every year, where we pump the fuel off to prevent a spill. On average, we usually have to assist a large commercial vessel once every couple of years."

The boats are also vital during flooding events as they are used to survey, assist recovery and assess damage.

For more information, go online to:

[www.nrc.govt.nz/onthewater](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/onthewater)



The new 5.8 metre regional council workboat in the early stages of construction.

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# GREEN, AMBER, RED - TO SWIM OR NOT!

Summer water quality tests have begun, showing how safe Northland's most popular beaches, rivers and lakes are for swimming.

The Northland Regional Council has been monitoring bacterial levels at popular swimming spots over summer for more than a decade.

John Ballinger, the council's Environmental Monitoring Officer – State of the Environment and Compliance, says this year's programme began at the end of November and will run until the end of March 2012.

"The programme monitors bacterial levels at beaches, lakes and rivers most often used for swimming, water sports and similar forms of recreation."

He says hundreds of samples will be taken from 47 coastal and 12 freshwater sites across the region this year.

Results will be posted online every Friday at the council's website [www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming) allowing people to make informed decisions about where they swim.

John says this year's programme will contain about 30 percent fewer sites than last year.

"Sites have been removed for a variety of reasons, including a number which are permanently recording good water quality, or which are no longer as popular as they once were."

He says a number of spots which have consistently recorded poor results in recent years have also been removed, as in most instances tests showed they had been contaminated by ducks or gulls, and there was little the council could do to prevent this.

In those cases, it made more sense to allocate staff resources elsewhere and erect permanent signs to inform the public of the issue and risk, rather than continuing to test for a known issue.

In a number of other cases, where tests showed sites had been contaminated by livestock, the council was working with nearby landowners to try to manage the issue.

John says the summer samples will be given one of three grades, depending on the number of bacteria they contain: 'Green' (safe to swim), 'Amber' (elevated levels of bacteria) or 'Red' (unsafe for swimming).

As well as being posted on the regional council's website, results will also be forwarded weekly to district councils, the Northland District Health Board and other interested parties.

John says the health board (DHB) and district councils are also informed of any results showing elevated bacterial levels within 24 hours.

"It then becomes the responsibility of the DHB and the appropriate district council to take action."

This can include further site investigations to establish the source of contamination, public warnings not to swim or gather shellfish, or the erection of permanent warning signs at the worst sites."

John says most of the popular spots monitored by the regional council are safe for swimming most of the time; however, Northland's high rainfall and hilly terrain meant many could be temporarily contaminated by run-off from the land for several days after heavy rain.

He says there are four simple things to use as a good rule of thumb to judge water quality:

- **DON'T** swim if there are warning signs indicating water is unsafe.
- **AVOID** swimming for two to three days after heavy rain.
- **DON'T** swim if water looks dirty/murky, smells, or has scum on the surface.
- **BE AWARE** of potential sources of contamination nearby or upstream.

People wanting to check water quality at their favourite spot can visit online: [www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming) or freephone **0800 002 004**

Concerns about water quality can be reported to the council's freephone 24/7 Environmental Hotline on **0800 504 639**

## Kaeo flood works brought forward

A combination of \$161,000 extra government funding and the desire to better accommodate affected landowners has prompted changes to planned flood protection work for Kaeo.

The Northland Regional Council had planned a two-stage, ratepayer-funded project to help reduce flooding in Kaeo over the next two years.

Stage One, worth about \$600,000, was to begin in the summer of 2012/13 with construction of a new, roughly 200-metre long, four-metre high stopbank either side of State Highway 10 to deflect floodwaters away from the township.

Stage Two would have eventually seen a second, much longer stopbank and floodwall – together about 900m long – built between Whangaroa College and the Pohue Pa site, but a start date and funding for this stage had not been decided.

However, regional councillor Joe Carr says the combination of an extra \$161,000 funding from the Ministry of Education and further consultation with the Kaeo River-Whangaroa Catchment Liaison Committee and affected landowners now enables the council to start work on the much more substantial Stage Two first.

"As well as helping deflect floodwaters away from the town centre, Stage Two also gives extra protection to the college."



Joe says the council had initially ruled out an early Stage Two due to funding issues, including keeping a targeted rate – levied on local landowners – to a manageable level.

However, the extra government funding would enable Stage Two to go ahead at no added cost to ratepayers and bring some certainty to landowners, including one whose farm property will effectively be cut in two by the new stopbank.

Joe says the council will apply for the necessary resource consents shortly. All going well, work would now begin in the summer of 2012/2013.

Council Land and Rivers Senior Programme Manager, Bruce Howse, says a revised timetable and funding arrangements for what had been Stage One would likely be addressed through a future Annual Plan process, probably during the 2013/2014 financial year.

He says deferring construction of the smaller stopbank either side of State Highway 10 will not cause any additional problems in the area, given that the more extensive Stage Two works will go ahead.

Both stages are designed to be independently effective but, irrespective of this, Bruce says neither offers a "magic bullet" to Kaeo's flooding problem.

Both are designed to reduce, rather than totally prevent, future flooding.

"Neither stopbank will protect Kaeo against flows from the Waikara Creek, but both will give added protection against overflow from the Kaeo River, which currently overtops State Highway 10 and flows west along SH10 through the township, rejoining the river at the lower end of town."

Previously, floodwaters more than one metre deep had swept at relatively high speeds through the town centre.

"While the planned works can't prevent flooding altogether, they should cut the speed of floodwaters quite significantly while also reducing the depth of them."

Bruce says they will also greatly improve the effectiveness of sandbags and flood shutters used by residents.

Regional councillors voted this year as part of their Annual Plan process to establish a Kaeo-Whangaroa River Management Rate that will see \$150,405 (incl GST) raised annually for Kaeo flood work.

Bruce says the new rate of \$74.53 (incl GST) for all ratepayers in the former Whangaroa Ward will not change, despite the decision to start with what was originally Stage Two.

## WHANAU LEAD THE WAY

A project underway in a Ngati Hine forest near Pipiwai is helping protect 500 hectares of native forest and providing a way for young people to become involved in a valuable community project.

Te Kaiakiri Mai O Te Orewai Trust established a Community Pest Control Area for its forest in June of this year.

Community Pest Control Areas are Northland Regional Council initiatives which provide a tool for communities to undertake pest control and council funding for five years to help support community pest control initiatives.

Ex-forestry worker Hori Niha leads the work on the ground, which involves trapping possums and recovering their fur.

Hori manages a five-person Taskforce Green team which works systematically across the whole forest using historic logging tracks to gain access, including sometimes by quad and horseback.

Hori says the rediscovery of old track systems has been rewarding and the possum control has not only provided a way to protect the bush but has also meant that the team is learning many new skills.



"The hills can be steep and the work demanding at times, as we will often check traps in the rain. Everyone must be physically fit and enjoy being in the forest," he says.

The team can service 300 possum traps and has an extensive network of trails which link major tracks to ensure complete coverage of the forest.

"We also target stoats and rats in selected areas as these pests are also causing damage," says Hori.

He says the team is aware that the kauri dieback disease can be spread by footwear so warns people not to enter the forest for hunting or walking without checking with them first.

In addition to the regional council-funded CPCA the project has also gained the support of the ASB Trust, Ngāpuhi Rūnanga and Hancock Forestry.

For more information about CPCAs, go online to: [www.nrc.govt.nz/cpca](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/cpca) or talk to one of the council's Biosecurity team on freephone **0800 002 004**



### ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT NOW AVAILABLE

The Northland Regional Council Annual Monitoring Report 2010-2011 (AMR) is now available on the council's website and at all council offices.

The AMR provides a summary of the results of environmental monitoring carried out by the council throughout the year, and covers:

- Air quality
- Land and biodiversity
- Biosecurity
- Environmental compliance
- Environmental incidents
- Coastal water quality
- Recreational bathing water quality
- Rivers and streams
- Lakes
- Hydrology
- Groundwater
- Waste management

To request a copy of the AMR, go online to: [www.nrc.govt.nz/amr](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/amr) or call freephone **0800 002 004**

# EYES ON MARINE PESTS

"Marine pests could have the greatest impact on Northland's economic, cultural, social and environmental integrity!"

According to Northland Regional Council Biosecurity Senior Programme Manager, Don McKenzie – whose team works to reduce the spread of pest plants and animals in the region – marine pests are one of our region's greatest threats.

"Like much of our biodiversity, marine life is also at risk from invasive pests from overseas and surrounding ports," says Don.

"The arrival and uncontrolled spread of introduced marine species and disease presents a real threat to Northland's unique marine environment."

He says activities like aquaculture, recreational use of the marine environment and the collection of kaimoana (seafood) are at stake.

"Northlanders who enjoy the coast can play a part in protecting it by keeping vigilant, knowing which marine pests to watch out for, and reporting anything unusual," he says.

"It only takes a single action by one person to make an enormous difference. Simply report marine pests using the **0800 80 99 66** MAF hotline – that's all it takes."

Marine pests can arrive in Northland via ballast water, poorly maintained boats and slow moving vessels.

"Preventative and proactive actions to stop new marine pests arriving in Northland are really important, because few control tools are currently available," says Don.

Recent marine pest workshops offered throughout Northland – in partnership with MAF Biosecurity – were attended by more than 120 people. Key topics for the workshop included identifying the top six nasties to be kept out.

Don says there are also organisms already here that the council wants to prevent from spreading further throughout the region: the **Asian Paddle Crab**, which is more aggressive than our native paddle crab; **Eudistoma sea squirt**, which forms clusters of white tubes of different lengths; and **Styela Clava**, a large club-shaped sea squirt which can smother native species around marine structures.

"Everyone can help protect Northland's marine environment by preventing these species from spreading – the more eyes we have on the ground noticing and reporting unusual marine species, the better," says Don.

"We are encouraging regular users of the marine environment to be vigilant; these include divers, fishermen, people in the aquaculture industry, shell and seaweed collectors, kayakers and coastal care groups."

**For more information about marine pests, go online to: [www.nrc.govt.nz/nasties](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/nasties)**

## STOP THE SPREAD OF MARINE PESTS

Everyone can help stop the spread of marine pests in Northland's coastal environment.

- Ensure that vessel hulls are clean when they arrive (and leave) Northland; the same goes for marine equipment like barges and piles.
- Keep your boat bottom and marine gear clean by flushing with freshwater or an approved treatment, especially when moving location.
- Haul out your vessel and remove large fouling matter by hand. Dispose of this in a bin, not back into the sea. This will also reduce drag and fuel costs.
- Antifoul your hull as per your maintenance plan.
- If you spot something different in the marine environment – note its location, take a photograph or collect a sample and immediately call the free 24/7 MAF hotline on 0800 80 99 66

**For more information, check the MAF Biosecurity website: [www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests](http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz/pests)**

## TOP SIX NASTIES

1. The **Northern Pacific Sea Star** has five upturned arms.
2. The **European Shore Crab** is green and has five sharp spines behind each eye.
3. **Chinese Mitten Crab** with its hairy front claws.
4. The **Asian Clam** with two shell halves of different size.
5. A bright green marine algae called **Caulerpa taxifolia**.
6. The **Mediterranean Fanworm**, up to 40cm tall with a single spiral fan. Currently found in the Waitemata Harbour (Auckland) and Lyttelton Harbour (Canterbury).



## NAVIGATION SAFETY – have your say

Northlanders are being urged to have their say on the Draft Navigation Safety Bylaw 2012.

A summary of the proposed changes is available online at: [www.nrc.govt.nz/draftnavbylaw](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/draftnavbylaw) The proposal is open for public consultation until Friday 3 February 2012, with submission hearings scheduled for late February 2012.

Northland Regional Council's Regional Harbourmaster Jim Lyle says the proposed changes will update the current bylaw to incorporate safety improvements and to bring it in line with current developments in maritime recreational activities.

"Maritime incidents over the past several years have been analysed, and the information gathered has led to the proposal to amend or introduce a number of bylaw clauses to improve safety," says Jim.

"The bylaw is also being updated to include developments in maritime recreational activities and the effects these have on other users of our waters and coastal communities."

He says some procedural changes are also proposed where these are needed, as a result of incidents and feedback received from various users and user groups.



## MAINTAINING MOORINGS

Owners of the more than 3000 moorings around Northland's coast are being encouraged to book mooring maintenance well in advance.

Deputy Harbourmaster for the Northland Regional Council, Chidambaram Surendran, says one of the most important things for mooring owners to remember is that all mooring maintenance must be carried out by an approved contractor.

"Moorings are at a high risk of failure after three years, which is why the Navigation Safety Bylaw specifies that maintenance of all moorings must be carried out by a council-approved mooring contractor at least once every three years," says Chidambaram.

"With a large number of moorings spread across the region, it is often impossible for the contractors to service a mooring at short notice, as they may be committed elsewhere."

As a result, the council is recommending that mooring owners book their maintenance slot with an approved contractor at least one year before the due date.

"This will help the mooring contractors to plan the movements of their barges around the region. It will also ensure that if the contractor is only visiting an area once in six months, the mooring will be serviced within the three year period allowed."

Chidambaram says that commercial owners, whose livelihoods depend on their vessel, should seriously consider having their mooring serviced every two (not three) years.

"It's important for mooring owners to realise that they may not be covered by their insurance provider if the maintenance has not been completed at the required intervals. Some insurance policies may require servicing/maintenance at intervals more frequent than that required by the council"

To assist mooring owners, the Regional Harbourmaster's office – staffed and run by the Northland Regional Council – is now sending reminder letters to mooring owners six months before the service becomes due, instead of the previous three month notice period.

Chidambaram says another important reminder is for mooring owners to regularly check the headlines on moorings themselves, to ensure they are in good condition and replaced or mended as required.

"Mooring headlines often suffer damage and are prone to break due to constant chafing against the fairleads and exposure to the elements. It is just not worth losing your vessel for the cost of a rope!"

For more information, go to:

[www.nrc.govt.nz/mooringsandmarinas](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/mooringsandmarinas) or call freephone **0800 002 004** and ask to speak to one of the council's maritime team.

A summary of the main proposed changes is available on the council's website, along with a detailed comparison with the current bylaws.

"The main changes are highlighted in the summary and we're keen for everyone who uses the marine environment to have their say on the proposal," says Jim.

The main changes highlighted include:

- **The clause on life jackets has been rewritten to reinforce the legal requirement to carry life jackets for every person on a vessel and the requirement to actually wear these in certain circumstances.**
- **Introducing new areas where vessels will be permitted to exceed 5 knots to engage in high speed activities. Some of these new areas will replace existing ski lanes with new boundaries.**
- **Some existing ski lanes are proposed to be removed due to increasing activity posing hazards.**
- **In mooring areas that are at full capacity, mooring owners will not be able to sell their mooring space. The council will allocate the space using a 'waiting list' system if an existing owner wants to give up their space.**
- **Amending the definition of 'mooring' to make it clear that pile moorings require regular maintenance like swing moorings.**
- **New definitions of 'estuary' and 'estuary mouth' to clearly spell out where some activities could be limited, e.g. kiteboarding.**
- **Restricting board sport enthusiasts from travelling faster than 5 knots within 50 metres of any other vessel, raft or person in the water – note this will not affect surfing activities.**
- **Extra information on 'prohibited areas' including a map for the area around the Refining NZ wharves and one around the Northport wharf.**

- **Changes to some 'prohibited anchorages' as a result of alterations to underwater cable areas.**
- **A new section containing safety information and guidelines including recommendations for visibility of kayaks, stand-up paddle boarding, bar crossing procedures and a trial of a tsunami warning light at Tutukaka marina.**

For more information, go to:

[www.nrc.govt.nz/draftnavbylaw](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/draftnavbylaw) or call freephone **0800 002 004** to request a copy of a document that lists all the changes or the full text of the Draft Navigation Safety Bylaw 2012.

# Draft Regional Public Transport Plan launched

A new plan which will provide a strategic blueprint for the region's public transport for the next six years has been released for public comment.

As a council, we're legally required to produce the Draft Regional Public Transport Plan (RPTP) 2011-2017 because we both administer – and rate for – Whāngārei's public bus service 'CityLink' while also administering the Total Mobility Scheme, which gives disabled and elderly people access to discounted taxi trips.

John Bain, Chairman of the regional council's Regional Transport Committee, says the RPTP is a long-term plan that looks at how public transport services are delivered in Northland.

He says to date both 'CityLink' and Total Mobility have been successful and popular with Whāngārei's urban users.

The bus service alone now carries almost 300,000 passengers annually – that's 350% more than the 80,000 passengers its predecessor moved when it began operating in 2000.

He says among the challenges in coming years will be how to maintain an affordable, quality service while continuing to grow patronage.

"The plan proposes investigating ways of improving user experience, including public transport information and ticketing options."

However, John says the plan also recognises that providing access to public transport in other parts of Northland is of equal – if not greater – importance.

It also acknowledges that achieving this poses a real challenge because so many of our communities are relatively small, rural-based and essentially dependent on cars.

John says the plan proposes helping those with a disability by not only maintaining the Total Mobility Scheme, but also by looking for opportunities to expand it to areas outside of Whāngārei.

"It also recognises the other public transport services that already exist elsewhere in the region and provides guidance



on how their operators can try to gain subsidies to help reduce their costs."

To make allowances for the upcoming Christmas-New Year break, the council is running an extended public consultation period for public submissions, which began in late November and will run until 3pm on Monday 16 January 2012.

Copies of the full Draft Regional Public Transport Plan – and a summary document – can be viewed on the Northland Regional Council website:

[www.nrc.govt.nz/publictransportplan](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/publictransportplan)

Printed copies are also available from Northland Regional Council offices and public libraries.

John says input from the public will help shape the final plan before its adoption, currently scheduled for February 2012.

## RUAKAKA BUS SERVICE SURVEY

Bream Bay residents are being surveyed to gauge demand for the possible reintroduction of a public bus service between Ruakaka and Whāngārei.

A public bus service to the area was last trialled about eight years ago, but was discontinued due to low passenger numbers.

However, following a recent increase in requests for a Ruakaka bus service from potential users, the Northland Regional Council is now revisiting the issue.

The regional council's Public Passenger Transport Officer, Sharlene Selkirk, says the survey aims to find out how many people would now use a Ruakaka service, so council can see if it's feasible to run another trial in the area.

The survey, which began this month, will also ask residents about their interest in carpooling.

"Carpooling is a cheaper and more environmentally-friendly option than driving alone, and there are several schemes running around the country. If people in the area are interested, we can help facilitate the set-up of a local scheme to put them in touch with one another."

Keep an eye out for a survey form, which will be published for the second time in the local Bream Bay News newspaper on Thursday 15 December (it was also printed on 1 December).

The survey has also been distributed to various places in the Ruakaka area and is available on our website:

[www.nrc.govt.nz/ruakakasurvey](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/ruakakasurvey)

Sharlene says in order to ensure as many people as possible get a chance to comment, the survey will run for an extended period until Friday 17 February 2012.

"It's a really busy time of year for most people, especially with the holiday season coming up, so we're running the survey for more than 10 weeks."

## Busabout Kaitāia fans urged to 'use it or lose it'



Far North residents are being encouraged to use the Busabout Kaitāia community bus service as often as they can in a bid to secure possible future funding from central and local government.

The service has been operated on a limited budget by the Kaitāia-based Community Business and Environment Centre (CBEC) since June 2009, but with few regular passengers had been facing the prospect of imminent closure without outside funding.

Its operators recently secured \$70,000 of limited funding from the Northland Regional Council and the New Zealand Transport Agency (\$35,000 each), and in October Busabout Kaitāia began operating as a joint CBEC/regional council venture.

It currently operates daily worker and shopper runs along three routes to and from Kaitāia via Ahipara, Pukenui or Mangōnui, as well as a separate route offering regular week day trips to Kaitāia's new multimillion dollar Pak 'N Save supermarket in North Rd.

Sharlene Selkirk, the regional council's Public Passenger Transport Officer, says the latest funding will expire at the end of June next year.

The funding will be paid out each month in the form of a subsidy for each passenger carried – rather than a simple one-off lump sum grant – and is basically buying a few months of extra time for the service to give it time to raise passenger numbers.

"It's basically a 'use it or lose it' situation," Sharlene explains. "Some trips are carrying very few, if any, passengers, which is obviously not sustainable in the long term."

She says if the service manages to get its regular passenger numbers up, it will hopefully improve the economic viability of the service enough to attract further possible funding from the regional council and NZTA from July next year.

"Realistically, to achieve this we need to grow patronage from the current low levels to a more sustainable seven or eight passengers per trip."

Sharlene says staff from both CBEC and the regional council are working closely to monitor trips and gather passenger statistics.

As part of this, it's likely some poorly-used services may be removed altogether as early as February 2012, again to ensure the service is running efficiently.

"We don't want to have to make any cuts. However, we will have no choice if we are to meet these NZTA prescribed economic evaluation criteria. Our regional councillors and transport staff have endorsed these criteria," she says.

In effect, Kaitāia people are being asked to commit to supporting the service more regularly if they want to see it continue. "It would be great shame if Kaitāia and the Far North were to lose this service, especially given the terrific hard work and enthusiasm CBEC has already put in to it."

# OIL SPILL

## – are we ready?



Regular training is carried out with a range of regional council staff and others from Northland and further afield.

The recent 'Rena' container ship disaster in the Bay of Plenty has highlighted the potential threat of oil spills to Northland's coast and economy.

Northland Regional Council Regional Harbourmaster, Jim Lyle, says Northland has long been considered one of the parts of New Zealand considered at risk of a medium to large (50 tonne-plus) oil spill.

"Because Northland is home to the Marsden Pt oil refinery, and a large volume of commercial shipping also passes through our waters, we've always been aware of, and have prepared for, potential oil spills," says Jim.

"An international disaster on the scale of the 'Rena' would obviously need to be led by outside agencies like Maritime New Zealand (MNZ). However, Northland is able to handle smaller spills."

Northland boasts almost 60 trained oil spill responders, some of the best in New Zealand, many of whom have been called on to provide assistance during the 'Rena' grounding.

"As well as providing assistance during the 'Rena' spill, Northland staff have also attended some of the larger international oil spills in recent years, including the BP oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico and the 'Pacific Adventurer' off Australia's Sunshine Coast," says Jim.

Northland has a detailed Regional Oil Spill Contingency Plan that is regularly updated. Jim says we've also worked proactively over a number of years to put in place protocols and safety measures designed to better protect the region's environment from oil spills.

These included the Dynamic Under Keel Clearance System, which uses a network of special equipment at the entrance to Whāngārei Harbour to detect whether it is safe for larger vessels to enter, especially during rough weather or different tidal conditions.



Stopping an oil spill before it reaches the harbour.

Jim says the council was also instrumental in ensuring the Poor Knights Islands became the first spot in the world to be formally protected by a 'Mandatory Area to be Avoided' international designation, banning large ships from travelling too close to them.

"From December 2004 all transiting ships more than 45 metres long have legally had to stay at least five nautical miles (9.26km) to the east (outside) of the Poor Knights Islands," says Jim.

The regional council had been pushing for that designation – which applies to the area between Cape Brett and Bream Head – since a significant spill near the islands in 1999.

Northland is also home to a large stockpile of Maritime New Zealand oil spill recovery equipment, including a purpose-built \$200,000-plus, 8.2 metre oil recovery vessel, 'Taranui', based at Marsden Point.

The council maintains the equipment on behalf of Maritime NZ and holds regular training exercises to make sure the right people and equipment can be put into action quickly.

It also has Memoranda of Understanding with Refining NZ, Northport, NorthTugz and the Department of Conservation, covering the joint use of resources, plant, equipment and staff to tackle oil spills as required.

## A reminder ... please drive safely on Northland beaches

Summer brings an influx of visitors to Northland and more vehicles using the beaches. Beach patrols will be happening around the region as well as a family fun day at Rarawa on 6 January 2012 to remind people how important it is to drive safely on the beach.

For more information, go online to: [www.nrc.govt.nz/beachdriving](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/beachdriving) or call freephone 0800 002 004 and ask for the new 'Safe beach driving' brochure.

