

Welcome

Nau mai haere mai

Among the topics covered in this issue is the discovery and successful removal of more than 10,000 invasive *Styela clava* (clubbed tunicate sea squirt) from the Marsden Cove Marina.

The Regional Council is keen to talk to Northland boaties about a number of topical coastal management issues over the next few weeks, including marine biosecurity, sewage, navigation and safety. See Page 2 for details.

Congratulations to those behind the almost 160 projects granted a share of over \$500,000 from this year's Northland Regional Council Environment Fund.

Best wishes,
Ken Paterson
Chief Executive Officer



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NRC Environment Fund awards more than \$500,000 in 2008

Projects ranging from sand dune protection to pest control have been awarded a share of this year's \$500,000-plus Northland Regional Council Environment Award.

One hundred and fifty seven projects – worth a combined \$514,447 – were approved for initial funding, with another \$5503 set aside for other qualifying projects which may arise during the year. Sixty-eight of the projects funded were from the Far North District, 56 from the Whangarei District and 33 from Kaipara.

The fund, now in its 13th year, aims to help people improve and protect Northland's natural environment. Total funds allocated since 1996 now exceeds \$2.6 million.

Regional Council Deputy Chairman Ian Walker says this year the fund received 192 applications (up roughly 20 on last year) for almost \$1.2 million worth of funding for projects with a combined value of more than \$2 million.

Cr Walker says a similar number of projects were funded last year and the Council was pleased at both the ongoing level of interest and that such a diverse range of high quality projects could be funded again this year.

The largest single grant (\$18,000), will be used to fence wetlands and coastal margins in the Te Puna Inlet. The smallest grant (\$200) will be used for plant pest control in the Bream Bay area.

Cr Walker says the fund typically contributes up to 50 percent of the total cost of a project. Projects must be of long-term benefit to the local environment and clearly show evidence of good resource management.

Individuals and voluntary groups can apply for funding for eligible projects on private land. Landowners, community and conservation organisations, local Maori groups and schools have all successfully applied to the Environment Fund in the past.





Cleaning up Sea Squirt

Marine issues presentation for boaties

The summer boating season is fast approaching and the Northland Regional Council is keen to talk to boaties about some important issues involving the management of Northland's coastal waters.

The Council is inviting local boat, yacht and fishing clubs and any other interested groups or individuals to a presentation by Council staff on marine pests, sewage management – including proposed rule changes – and navigation and safety.

Regional Council Policy Analyst Justin Murfitt says staff are keen to talk to as many people as possible about these and other relevant issues.

“This is an opportunity for boaties and anyone interested in marine issues to discuss their concerns and learn about important issues.”

The presentation will look at the way boat sewage is managed in Northland and the effects of possible changes – already highlighted in a discussion paper released earlier this year – to the Regional Council's Coastal Plan.

“Boat sewage can contain a range of viruses and other nasties,” says Mr Murfitt.

“It can be much more concentrated than sewage from land because it hasn't been diluted by water from toilet cisterns, or treated. It has been estimated that the untreated discharge from one weekend boater can put the same amount of bacterial pollution into a localised area of water as the treated sewage from thousands of people on land.”

“We want to get the message out there about the pollution caused by raw sewage being discharged into our coastal waters and about the Council's ideas to better manage this.”

Mr Murfitt adds that marine pests are also a threat to our coast, and the presentation will cover the ways boaties can help reduce their spread.

“Marine pests threaten species native to our waters as well as aquaculture. We hope to get the message across to more boaties that by checking, cleaning and drying their boat hulls we can prevent further spread.”

A recent example of the invasiveness of marine pests was the discovery and subsequent removal of 10,000 *Styela clava* – clubbed tunicate sea squirt – from Marsden Cove Marina.

A locally-funded team of four divers removed the sea squirts during a six-day operation. The club-shaped pest, which has tough, leathery skin that varies from brownish-white, and yellow-brown to reddish-brown, favours protected areas like bays and harbours away from wave action.

Sea squirt poses a threat to our aquaculture industry due to its ability to blanket oyster and mussel lines, suffocating growing shellfish and competing for food and space.

“In this case the sea squirts were contained within a relatively small area (Marsden Cove) so we were presented with a rare opportunity to both size up the impact of a potential marine pest early and take proactive action to try to limit its spread,” says Councillor Craig Brown, Chair of the Northland Regional Council's Environmental Management Committee.

“Sea squirt can be spread by boats, and highlights the importance of cleaning a boat's hull and equipment and ensuring vessels are regularly treated with anti-fouling,” says Cr Brown.

The Council is also keen to discuss a number of navigation and safety issues with Northland harbour users at the presentations, which are likely to be held at central locations in Whangarei, Whangaroa and the Bay of Islands before Christmas.

Anyone interested in attending – or possibly hosting – a presentation should contact Justin Murfitt on freephone (0800) 002 004 or email justinm@nrc.govt.nz.



Erica and Lindsay Whyte

Ballance Farm Environment Award Supreme Winners

Exceptional skill and confidence implementing their vision for a 300ha beef breeding and finishing farm at picturesque Taupo Bay in the Far North saw Lindsay and Erica Whyte win the 2008 Northland Ballance Farm Environment Supreme Award.

Judges of the annual awards final cited the Whyte's passion and care for the land, soil and water as the highlights of their farm ownership.

The Whytes are the third supreme winners in Northland, following the Smeath family of Hukerenui (2007) and the Jack family of Pakaraka (2006). The Whytes also won the PPCS Livestock Farm Award for their skill in beef production and a reputation for exceptional cattle growth rates.

Northland Regional Council introduced the Awards to our region in 2005-06 through partnership with the Farm Environment Awards Trust.

Key objectives are to encourage sustainable land management and to display to farmers that profitability need not compromise and (in the best examples) can restore and enhance environmental values.

The judges were impressed by the Whyte's long-term view of soil conservation and protection of other natural resources. Nutrient management was described as excellent and livestock performance outstanding.

The property contains 80ha of steep country where the heavier cattle go during the wetter months, because the Whytes have a strict "no pugging" policy on the lowlands. The rest of the property operates as one big intensive beef system with 1.4ha paddocks on the flats and 1.4 to 1.8ha paddocks on the easy hills. Paddocks are split further into two or three cells during the vital months of May to October.

The Whytes aim to have well-finished, 15-month cattle to send to the works when the summer dry comes – bulls at 300kg carcaseweight (CW) and heifers at 230kg CW. Weaning occurs in April with bull calves around 250kg liveweight (LW) and heifer calves 220kg LW.

To achieve the finished weights, all weaners must grow at more than 1kg/day LW during their short stay on the Taupo Bay farm, hence the reputation for exceptional growth rates as a result of the mild Far North winter.

2009 Ballance Farm Environment Awards open

You can be rewarded for sustainable land management practices. Applications open for the 2009 Northland Ballance Farm Environment Awards, sponsored by Northland Regional Council, on 27 October 2008.

Details, including application form, are available from www.nrc.govt.nz/bfea or Gayle Farrell, Regional Co-ordinator, on (09) 433 1576.

Ian Walker is Council's new Deputy Chairman

Kaitia-based Ian Walker is the Regional Council's new Deputy Chairman.



Cr Walker replaced long-time Deputy Chair Peter Jensen as part of a recent overhaul of the way Council operates, both at Councillor and Staff level.

Whangarei-based Cr Jensen now chairs the Council's Audit and Finance Committee, while Cr John Bain (also

Whangarei-based) has become the new Chairman of the Regional Land Transport Committee.

Far North-based Councillor Joe Carr is Chair of a new Catchment Management Sub-Committee.

The revamp has also seen the appointment of Councillors to specific portfolios and spokesperson roles.

For more information go to: www.nrc.govt.nz/councillors



Changes to Regional Water & Soil Plan

The Northland Regional Council is undertaking preliminary work on a number of changes to the way freshwater resources are managed in Northland through its Regional Water and Soil Plan.

The changes aim to ensure there is good quality water to meet our region's current and future needs and to safeguard people and property from natural hazards.

"The Regional Council is keen to improve the Regional Water and Soil Plan so it better reflects the actual day-to-day uses of the region's water resources," says Jonathan Gibbard, Policy Specialist. "It will also make the plan easier to read and understand."

A new section of the plan is being drafted for managing Northland's coastal margin (land next to the coast) to ensure that land-use activities – earthworks, vegetation clearance and land preparation – do not worsen coastal hazards like erosion, storm surges or the impact of possible tsunamis.

Sea walls could also be regulated within this draft new section to ensure that people who undertake property protection do not increase the risk of coastal erosion or coastal flooding on neighbouring properties.

The amount of earthworks allowed without resource consent is also expected to change under the proposal, from a volume measurement to an area limit.

"Currently the volume measure causes confusion and is difficult to measure," says Mr Gibbard.

"An area limit is easier to measure in the field than volume."

Additional environmental standards are also proposed to make sure control measures are undertaken to reduce the risk of sediment washing off land and into waterways.

It is also proposed to reduce the amount of land vegetation able to be cleared by burning. The impact of clearing vegetation can be the same as earthworks activities, causing sediment discharges, erosion and poor water quality. As a result, vegetation clearance and earthworks rules are likely to have the same clearance limit under the proposed changes.

Council is currently assessing the practical and economic implications of the changes and plans to notify these before the end of this year. All directly affected parties will be informed and adverts placed in newspapers.

If you wish to be included on a mailing list for further information, please contact the Water and Soil Planning Team on freephone (0800) 002 004, or email: mailroom@nrc.govt.nz



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Caring for Northland and its environment

