

## Welcome

Nau mai haere mai

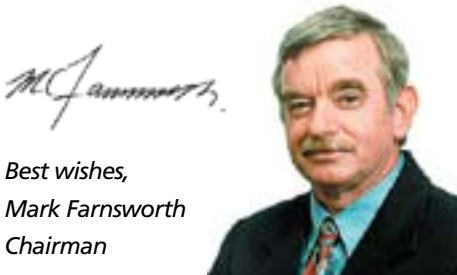
### Season's Greetings.

Summer is an especially busy time, with visitors arriving to enjoy our beaches and coastline. More visitors also means more vehicles on beaches; our staff will be out and about with information about safe driving on the beach (see story Page 4).

Council staff will also be out testing the water at our popular beach and river spots.

Congratulations to the nine Enviroschools Awards winners. Their story is on Page 2.

Finally, on behalf of my fellow Councillors and all Council staff, I wish all Northlanders and visitors a safe, happy and fun-filled festive season.



Best wishes,  
Mark Farnsworth  
Chairman

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## Safer swimming this summer

People keen to know how clean the water is at their favourite swimming spot this summer can find the answer quickly and simply with a few clicks of their computer mouse.

Over summer, Northland Regional Council staff will take hundreds of samples from about 40 coastal and 20 freshwater sites around the region. The annual 12-week programme – which began recently – monitors the levels of bacteria in the water. Results are posted weekly on the Council's website at [www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/swimming).

Samples are graded green (safe to swim), amber (potentially unsafe to swim), or red (unsafe for swimming).

Results are forwarded regularly to District Councils and the Northland District Health Board (NDHB). The NDHB is informed of any results showing elevated bacterial levels within 24 hours.

It's then up to the NDHB and the region's three District Councils to take action. This can include further 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.

While most Northland beaches are usually safe for swimming, they can become contaminated for several days after heavy rainfall, due to run-off from surrounding land. Both coastal and freshwater areas can also be contaminated by a variety of sources, including sewage, septic tank seepage, discharges from boats, urban stormwater, run-off from farmland, and stock in waterways.

If unsure about the water quality in your favourite area this summer, remember the following golden rules:

- AVOID swimming for two to three days after heavy rain
- DON'T swim if water is murky and you can't see your feet in knee-deep water
- BE AWARE of potential sources of contamination nearby or upstream
- DON'T swim if there is a warning sign indicating water may be unsafe

*If in doubt, check the Council's website or freephone 0800 002 004*



*Environmental Monitoring Officer Emma Simpson carrying out water quality testing for the NRC*



*Enviroschools participant Jason Moule, of Kamo Primary School, takes a closer look at local insect life during a walk through Hurupaki School's wetland.*

## Nine recognised at Enviroschools Awards

**Nine Northland schools have been recognised for a range of environmental initiatives – including community planting days and organic gardens – at the region's third annual Enviroschools Awards.**

Enviroschools is a whole-school approach to environmental education that encourages student-driven action, based on sustainable management of resources in several key areas of school life.

The Northland Regional Council played a key role in bringing Enviroschools north in 2003. There are now more than 30 local schools in the programme.

The December 3 awards recognised the whole school community, including students, teachers, non-teaching staff, trustees and local members of the public.

There are three levels of awards; Bronze, Silver and the highest, seldom-awarded Green-Gold. Silver was the highest local honour awarded this year.

The awards were held at Hurupaki School, where four schools were presented with silver awards; Okaihau College and Oromahoe School in the Far North District, and Whangarei's Kamo Intermediate and St Francis Xavier School. Bronze awards were presented to Riverview and Tautoro Schools (Far North), Whangaruru School and Kamo Primary (Whangarei), and St Joseph's School (Kaipara).

The Regional Council, which co-ordinates the Northland Enviroschools programme, and the Ministry of Education's advisory arm TEAM Solutions (which facilitates the programme in schools), run the awards.

## Far North multi-use facility wins \$500k NRC Funding

Five hundred thousand dollars has been allocated from the Northland Regional Council's Recreation Fund to help fund a \$2 million multi-purpose sports facility at the Kerikeri Sports Complex.

The funding – sought by the Far North District Council – is subject to further details of the proposal being provided and to the FNDC entering into an acceptable funding agreement.

The Kerikeri Sports Complex is intended to become a District centre for rugby, netball, cricket, league, touch, social tennis, athletics, running, walking, mountain biking, triathlon, and other associated recreational activities and programmes.

It will ultimately comprise 12 netball courts, three sports fields, 300-plus car parks and the multi-purpose shared facility – with eight changing rooms, canteen, social area, officials' meeting and control rooms, kitchen, and tiered decking for spectators.

It is part of a wider project to develop a significant central regional recreational hub in the Far North, comprising a redeveloped Kerikeri Domain, modern family-friendly facilities to accommodate multi-sport use of the Kerikeri Sports Complex, and indoor/outdoor recreational facilities at Waipapa-based Bay Sport.

### 2007-08 Annual Environmental Monitoring Report

**Council's 2007/08 Annual Environmental Monitoring Report will be available soon via the website at:** [www.nrc.govt.nz/Environment/Eye-on-the-environment](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/Environment/Eye-on-the-environment).

The report summarises the Council's environmental monitoring activities for the financial year. It includes the results of air and water quality monitoring programmes, progress with biodiversity and biosecurity projects, compliance monitoring of resource consents, and feedback on environmental incidents reported to the Council.

The report can be viewed online from early 2009 or downloaded in PDF format from the Council's website. **For further information, contact Emma Simpson on freephone 0800 002 004.**

# Backyard burning now harder in Whangarei

**Burning backyard waste is now effectively banned in urban Whangarei.**

Changes to the Northland Regional Council's Regional Air Quality Plan mean anyone wanting to burn waste at urban Whangarei properties smaller than one hectare will now need to apply for resource consent.

People breaching the new rules – which took effect this month – risk instant fines ranging from \$300 to \$1000 and/or prosecution. The new rules do not apply to BBQs, hangi or umu.

The area covered by the new rules includes Onerahi (to Grahamtown Rd), Maunu (to just before Pompallier Estate Drive), Tikipunga (to just past Whangarei Falls) and Kamo (to just past Springs Flat).

The changes also make burning on all other private land elsewhere in Northland a 'permitted activity' – meaning a consent is not needed subject to conditions to ensure the burning does not adversely affect adjoining landowners.

Other restrictions on rural fires may also be imposed by other organisations throughout the year; for instance, the Department of Conservation, and District Councils, for fire safety reasons.

Irrespective of the new Regional Council rules, people need to remember an existing total ban on burning of a number of materials still applies.

It is already illegal to burn rubber tyres, coated metal wires, timber treated with copper, chromium or arsenic, plastic containers, hazardous substances (or their containers) vehicle parts and oil.

Burning and smoke nuisance make up the single largest source of complaints – roughly a quarter of all those the NRC fields across the entire region.



*Scenes like this should now effectively be a thing of the past in urban Whangarei.*

Smoke nuisance should be reported to the Regional Council not the Fire Service. This allows Fire Service staff to concentrate on fires and other emergencies that pose a risk to people or property.

Residents living in urban Whangarei can apply for resource consent to burn backyard waste; however, they will have to meet a number of conditions first, including securing written consent from all surrounding neighbours.

The intention of the changes to Council's Air Quality Plan is to try to stop the nuisance and adverse health effects from backyard fire smoke in Whangarei's built-up areas.

Burning of unwanted green and other waste is currently responsible for about 9% of Whangarei city's annual air pollution and discharges about 52 tonnes of inhaleable soot and 270 tonnes of carbon monoxide into Whangarei's air.

There is currently an initial trial of a \$50 (GST exclusive) fee to process backyard burning consent applications. However, where possible, Council is encouraging people to compost or mulch unwanted green material or take it to the Whangarei District Council's Re:Sort refuse transfer station.

**Information on the new rules can be found on the Council's website at: [www.nrc.govt.nz/backyardburning](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/backyardburning).**



## Annual Report 2008 available

The Northland Regional Council's Annual Report and Summary Annual Report for the 2007/08 financial year have just been published.

Copies of the Report proper, or a 12-page summary, are available on the Northland Regional Council's website: [www.nrc.govt.nz/annualreport](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/annualreport).



# Driving on the beach this summer?

A series of family fun days will be held on Northland beaches this summer to provide information and raise awareness about safe beach driving.

The family fun days will be held at four locations:

- Baylys Beach and Glinks Gully, Sat 20 Dec and Fri 9 Jan
- Ahipara, Sun 21 Dec and Sun 11 Jan
- Ruakaka, Sun 28 Dec
- Tokerau, Sat 10 Jan

The events also aim to raise awareness of vehicles' impacts on the beach environment and remind motorists that normal road

rules apply on the beach. Some events will include sausage sizzles, guided beach walks and beach clean ups.

Meanwhile, signs urging motorists to drive safely on Northland's beaches and help protect the environment are also being erected at a number of popular summer spots around the region.

The signs are a joint venture between the Northland Regional Council, the region's three District Councils, the Department of Conservation and Police and are being funded by the New Zealand Transport Authority.

# River and rainfall data popular

A range of rainfall and river data – including flood warning levels – is proving a popular new feature on the Northland Regional Council's website.

The information – posted at [www.nrc.govt.nz/riversandrain](http://www.nrc.govt.nz/riversandrain) – is gathered automatically from a network of about 70 Council monitoring stations.

The data is useful to resource consent holders, farmers (including marine farmers) and schools, as well as the public and media during Civil Defence events. Data is posted at 9.30am daily but can be posted hourly in a flood or other emergency.

The river level data shows information from 30 automatic water level stations in rivers, as well as six tidal monitoring stations (four on the East Coast and two on the West Coast).

General information such as catchment details, map references, etc can be downloaded from monitored sites as a spreadsheet.

Rainfall data is collected from 25 sites, many of them located along East Coast areas which typically bear the brunt of heavy rainfall events.

Viewing real-time data enables important decisions to be made regarding heavy rainfall events and potential flooding for both Council Hydrology staff and the wider public.

Anyone with a computer and internet access can now view rainfall data and the likely effects it will have on river levels. The data could also prove useful in times of drought as a water management tool.

## How to contact us

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Our offices will be closed from 24 December 2008. Reopening 5 January 2009.



Caring for Northland and its environment

