

2007

State of the Environment Report



Caring for Northland
and its environment

NORTHLAND
REGIONAL
COUNCIL 



2007 STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT REPORT

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Cover pictures: Artwork created by Tame Kemp from Mangakahia Area School (top left) and Anri Dreyer from Dargaville Intermediate School (top right) for Seaweed 2008. Photographs (left to right): Northern rata (*Metrosideros robusta*), NRC field officer sampling for recreational bathing programme, volunteers at a Lake Omapere community planting day and coastal erosion in the Hokianga Harbour.

CHAIRMANS FOREWORD

Welcome to the Northland Regional Council's second State of the Environment Report. This report builds on the findings of the first State of the Environment Report for Northland, published in 2002 and provides updated and new information on the health of our region's natural and physical resources. It helps us to review what is happening in our environment, why it is happening and what we are doing about it. This latest report - as with its predecessor - is an "accountability card" against which future changes can be measured.

The report shows that progress has been made in some areas due to often quite significant effort and increased awareness of environmental issues but overall the region's environment is in a similar state to that of five years ago. There are some major issues that the region still faces, particularly:

- The poor water quality of many rivers and lakes in rural and urban areas;
- The on-going rapid development of our coastal environments and the resulting sewage-disposal problems;
- Risk of coastal, flooding and erosion hazards for inappropriately located development;
- Threats to the region's biodiversity from animal pests, weeds and changing land use patterns;
- High or potential over-allocation of some water resources;
- Sustainable land use management and soil conservation.

The Regional Council recognises that the region needs timely and accurate information about the environment and it has put in place programmes to monitor the state of the environment and to detect changes. The Council's monitoring programmes will give information on effectiveness of the policies of the Council's various planning documents and will provide vital direction as the Council moves to consider the implementation of more 'effects based' environmental management regimes.

Positive change in our environment will not happen on its own - all Northlanders need to be aware of the issues and take ownership and responsibility for our environment. This report gives Northlanders a very clear focus of the areas we need to be investing time, effort and resources.

This report contains valuable information that the Council will use in its environmental decision-making processes such as the upcoming Long Term Council Community Plan review process. The Regional Council will continue to work with a variety of agencies, including government departments, the three district councils, business, iwi and local communities to achieve positive changes in the state of Northland's environment.



Mark Farnsworth
Chairman

1 INTRODUCTION

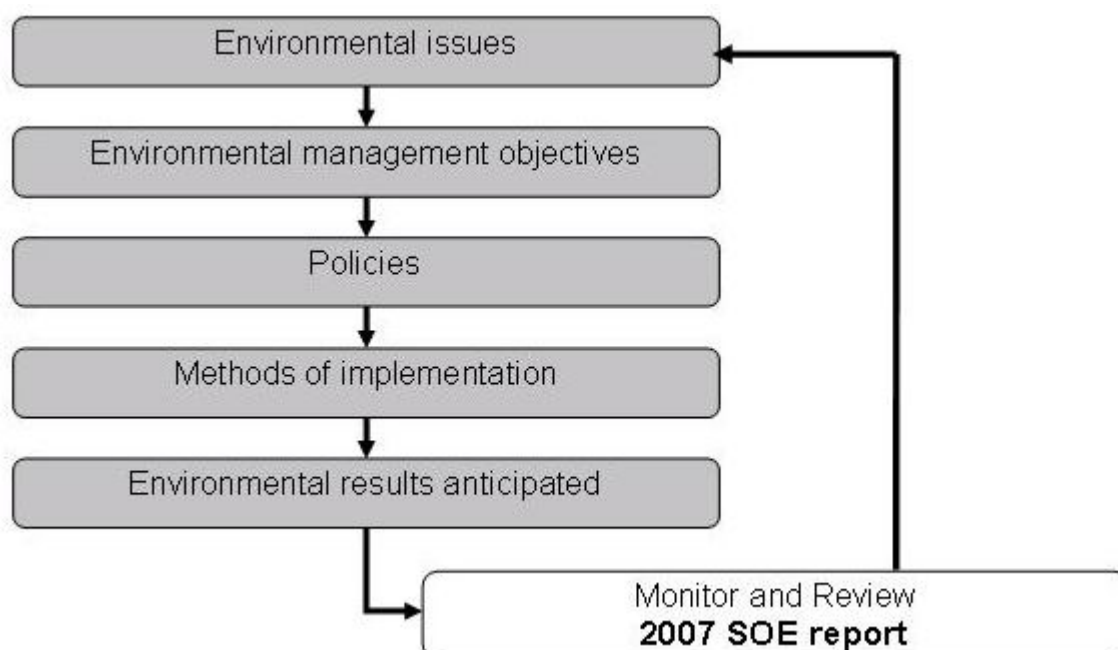


In accordance with good practice, the requirements of the Resource Management Act and commitment made in the Long Term Council Community Plan the Council has prepared a State of the Environment (SOE) Report for Northland. This is Northland Regional Council's second SOE report, which builds on the first report published in 2002. It aims to inform both the Regional Council and public of the human pressures acting on the environment, the current state of Northland's environment and the Council's and communities response to environmental issues. Where possible this report also presents information on whether the state of the environment is getting better, getting worse or staying the same.

This report brings together information gathered by the Council's various monitoring programmes, including both state of the environment monitoring, and resource consent and other compliance monitoring. Information has also been included from other agencies that collect environmental related data, such as the District Councils, Department of Conservation and National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research.

The content of the SOE report is linked to the Regional Policy Statement for Northland. The RPS provides an overview of and direction for the environmental management of the region. To achieve this, it contains objectives, policies, methods and anticipated environmental outcomes. This report also aims to inform the process of measuring the effectiveness of our policies and actions.

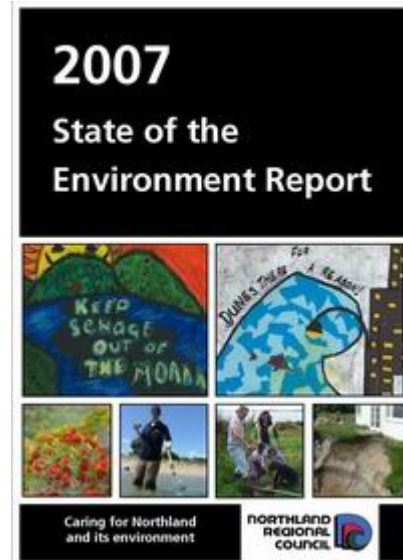
This report does not aim to provide the solutions to specific resource management problems – rather it provides information to help with environmental decision making, such as the upcoming Long Term Council Community Plan review process.



Report contents

This SOE report includes around 500 pages of information split into 17 chapters as follows:

2. Regional profile - provides an overview of Northland by giving a brief description of the region.
3. Air quality
4. Solid waste management – includes refuse and recycling volumes and landfill monitoring
5. Waste hazardous substances – includes contaminated sites
6. Coastal management
7. Coastal hazards
8. Coastal water quality
9. Lake quality – includes water quality and ecosystem health
10. Surface water quantity – covers river flow, lake level, rainfall and tidal monitoring
11. Groundwater resources – includes information on both groundwater quality and quantity
12. Surface water quality – predominately covers rivers and streams
13. Geothermal resources
14. Land and soils
15. Indigenous biodiversity
16. Natural hazards
17. Transportation
18. Tangata Whenua – provides information on how tangata whenua are involved in environmental monitoring



Chapter format

In the introduction of each chapter the objectives and environmental results anticipated from the Regional Policy Statement are summarised. The information where possible follows the same Pressure – State – Response framework used in the 2002 SOE report and by the Ministry for the Environment for national reporting. For example:

- Pressure includes indicators of environmental pressures or issues, such as activities or their effects that are believed to contribute to environmental stress.
- State includes indicators of environmental conditions, such as the state of natural and physical resources and ecosystems.
- Response includes indicators of society's responses, such as deliberate actions undertaken to address observed environmental changes or adverse effects.

Each chapter also includes a summary of areas identified where improvement is needed and ways that you can help to preserve and protect Northlands environmental resources. All chapters contain direct links to other relative technical and background reports already available on the Councils and other agencies websites. Finally most chapters include case studies which present specific environmental issues and examples.