

\$15,000 funding available for schools

Northland schools are being urged act quickly to try to secure part of a \$15,000 special Northland Regional Council award which aims to boost environmental education.

Council Environmental Education Officer Teresa Rudgley says Wednesday 14 May is the deadline for applications to this year's Environmental Curriculum Award fund.

The award aims to foster environmental education and schools can apply for a maximum \$2000 each from the fund, which must be spent on student-led environmental projects.

Last year 15 Northland schools were funded for a range of 17 diverse projects from replicating an ancient local ecosystem to combating noise and air pollution.



One of last year's recipients Te Kura Taumata o Panguru seen here receiving their award from Councillor Joe Carr. Their project **Whakarapa Awa (Our River - Once a Village)** aimed to raise awareness about their local river. The project included the whole school and covered, water testing, stream side planting as well as raising community awareness about the health of the river.

Applicants will need to show how their schools are putting effort into sustainably managing Northland's natural and physical resources, which is a key Regional Council goal.

Northland schools have been sent fliers advertising the awards. Schools need to have completed applications to the Council's main office - Private Bag 9021, Whangarei 0140 - by 5pm Wednesday 14 May 2008.

The Environmental Curriculum Award is just one way in which the Council is involved in Environmental Education.

What else is Council doing in environmental education?

The Regional Council encourages great environmental awareness and education through teacher workshops, school visits, its annual Youth Summit, support for regional science fairs and by participating in the national Enviroschools programme.

The Council also selects students to attend the annual Sir Peter Blake Youth Environment Forum in Wellington. This year, three Northland secondary school students have been selected to represent the Tai Tokerau at this event. Students have been selected from Kaitaia College, Te Kura Kaupapa O Te Rawhiti Roa and Whangarei Boys High School.

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This is largely due to improvements in discharges from industrial and farming sources and community wastewater treatment plants.

Northland had also seen pleasing amounts of habitat and biodiversity protection and much-needed research had been carried out into areas like groundwater resources, coastal hazards and biodiversity.

Good news, but the report has once again highlighted a number of other areas where the region needs to do better. These included the water quality of its lakes and its rivers in farming and urban areas, at-risk development in areas affected by coastal or flooding hazards, high or potential over-allocation of some water resources and sustainable land management (particularly soil conservation).

The Council plans to release a printed summary of the report before the end of the financial year. The detailed nature of the full report proper means it is only available in electronic form from the Council's website

www.nrc.govt.nz/soe

Further information

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Purongo Putaiao

Issue 4 — April 2008

Welcome Nau mai haere mai

Kia ora and welcome to the first issue of the Council Panui for 2008.

The Northland Regional Council has released its Draft Annual Plan and wants to hear your views on how it intends to spend a proposed budget of \$20.6 million over the 2008/09 year.

Key amongst the proposals is for around \$900,000 to be spent on reducing flood risk around the region. Funding for this will include a new targeted rate to collect just over \$100,000 in the Whangaroa/Kaero area. The new rate will be used to maintain river channels and streams in an effort to reduce flood risk and consequent damage to property.

Water quality will continue to be a key issue for the Council in the next 12 months. We plan to work closely with Northland's farmers and the dairy industry to ensure ongoing improvements to the standard of farm dairy effluent discharge in the region.

Please take the time to make a submission before the 13 May deadline.

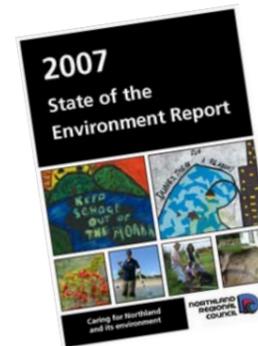
Wishing you a happy and safe 2008
Heio ano
Mark Farnsworth



Kei roto

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The state of our environment



There are not many surprises in the latest comprehensive report on the state of Northland's environment.

The Northland Regional Council earlier this month released a 500-plus page State of the Environment (SOE) Report examining air, freshwater, coastal, land and biodiversity issues.

The report represents several years work by Council staff and is now available on the Council's website at:

www.nrc.govt.nz/soe

The main purpose of the report is to enable both the Council and wider Northland community to make informed decisions on environmental management issues.

The report generally focuses on regional environmental trends over the period from 2002 to 2007, but also covers an even longer period where data is available.

It builds on the findings of the previous SOE report - published in 2002 - and draws on extensive data from the Council's own monitoring programmes, as well as data from other agencies like District Councils, the Department of Conservation and the National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research.

The scope and complexity of the latest report makes it difficult to accurately generalise its findings, but overall it contains few surprises. While there have been some changes, the region's environment is in a similar state to that of five years ago.

Council concedes that at first glance, that lack of overall improvement since 2002 might appear disappointing. However, the reality is that despite often quite significant efforts and increased awareness of environmental issues, the scale of Northland's problems mean it will realistically take more than a few years for large scale improvements to become apparent.

However, Northlanders can still take heart from some of the positive changes.

There have been welcome improvements in some aspects of the health of our waterways; for example the levels of potentially harmful nutrients in some of our major rivers and streams have reduced significantly.

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New Whangarei public bus service

Passenger transport company NZ Bus has been awarded the local authority contract to run Whangarei's public bus service for the next five years.

NZ Bus – which purchased Whangarei-based bus company Adams Travelines in January – beat two other tenderers, including current operator Whangarei Bus Services Ltd, to secure the Northland Regional Council contract.

Council Chief Executive officer Ken Paterson paid tribute to Whangarei Bus Services, which he says has run the existing service successfully since November 2001 and which had carried its one millionth passenger last year. However, he says the decision to award NZ Bus the contract comes after a formal tender evaluation process.

NZ Bus is an extremely experienced operator with more than 2000 employees. Owned by New Zealand-based infrastructure investment company Infratil since 2005, its assets include more than 1000 buses, nine ferries and significant transport-related infrastructure.

The company will take over the Whangarei service on July 1 and will operate a fleet of 10 new low-floor, low emission buses to an extended timetable.

The new fleet will sport a new, locally-designed look and will operate under the name 'City Link Whangarei'.

NZ Bus Chief Executive Officer Bruce Emson says Adams Travelines, the company's local passenger service company in Whangarei, is excited about the opportunity to provide urban bus services.

The new service will offer increased value for money as the new contract calls for buses to run more frequently and for longer hours.

Fares are currently being reviewed as they have not increased for seven years, despite large increases in fuel and other operating costs.

The Whangarei public bus service is currently funded by the Whangarei District Council and Land Transport NZ and administered by the Northland Regional Council.

What's happening at the Council?



Farewell ...

... Treena Davidson, who leaves to work abroad.

Treena, Team Leader of the Water and Soil Planning Team has resigned from Council to take up a VSA position in South

Africa, working with indigenous people and a local Council.

Previous to her employment at the Council, Treena worked for the Ngatiwai Trust Board assisting it with policy development. Ms Davidson pays tribute to her time with the Trust Board, saying it was an invaluable experience.

VSA - Volunteer Service Abroad - sees people undertaking voluntary work to help grow communities and countries.

Treena's experience working both for a Trust Board and a Council will be extremely useful in her new position.

The Council wishes Treena well in her new endeavours.



Introducing ...

... the new Team Leader for the Regional Water and Soil Planning Team, Jonathan Gibbard.

Jonathan, a familiar face, has worked for the Council for a number of years as a Coastal Policy Analyst.

Jonathan looks forward to the new challenges ahead. Anyone wishing to contact him can do so by calling freephone 0800 002 004 or 438 4639.

Success at field days ...

The Northland Regional Council site promoting 'living with climate change', has been judged Best Themed Site at the Dargaville Field Days 2008.

The Northland Agricultural Field days were held this year at the new site in Awakino Point East Road. The new site worked exceptionally well and the opening day had a record of 6,700 people attend - with 23,000 people attending the event overall.

The Council's displays included such things as, sustainability starts at home, reduce your footprint, save our foils, reduce pest animals and wipe out pest plants.

As in past years, the Council offered a free tasting of 'pest delights' with this years edible delight on offer being 'BBQ bunny bangers'. The cocktail sized sausages were a great success with 2000 being served up over the weekend.

The Council's site was manned by staff from across the organisation.

Here, staff on the day receive the award for Best Themed Site on behalf of Council.



Have your say - NRC Draft Annual Plan



Northlanders are being urged to have their say on how and where the Northland Regional Council should spend ratepayers' money for the 2008/09 year.

Northlanders have until **Tuesday 13 May 2008**, to comment on the Regional Council's Draft Annual Plan 2008-2009 on a variety of planned projects – including \$900,000 of new spending designed to reduce flood risks.

The main purpose of the Annual Plan is to provide updated financial information on the budget and rates for the 2008-2009 year, and to offer the community the opportunity to help determine where and how the budget is spent.

Northland Regional Councillors recently approved a \$20.6 million draft budget for the 12 months beginning 1 July. The draft plan largely follows a direction set out in the Council's previously approved Long Term Council Community Plan 2006-2016. The draft plan identifies any changes or additions to the detailed information contained in the Community Plan.

Council Chairman Mark Farnsworth urges people to take the time to comment on the various initiatives outlined in the draft plan. He says submissions are important and invaluable in aiding Councillors to make appropriate decisions.

Copies of the Draft Annual Plan 2008-2009 and the Northland Community Plan are available from the Regional Council offices or by calling 0800 002 004. A summary of the Draft Annual Plan was widely distributed over the past two weeks.

Submissions on the Draft Annual Plan 2008/09 will be considered by Councillors at hearings in early June. Based on submissions, changes to the Draft will be incorporated in a revised Annual Plan to be presented to the full Council for adoption at its June meeting.

A final version of the Annual Plan will then be printed and distributed in late July.

Aquaculture Management Areas

Parts of Northland's coastline – including Whangarei Harbour and the eastern Bay of Islands - will effectively be off-limits to marine farming in line with the community's wishes, the Northland Regional Council recently confirmed.

Councillors at their April monthly meeting in Whangarei confirmed a number of recommendations from a four-member Hearings Committee which late last year considered more than 330 submissions on the Council's proposals to establish an aquaculture planning framework for Northland.

Regional Councillor Lorraine Hill, who chaired the Hearings Committee, says among key concerns raised by submitters had been that the NRC's plans did not specifically ban marine farming from certain parts of Northland.

That changed when Councillors agreed with the Hearings Committee's recommendations to include a raft of 'AMA restriction areas' in which aquaculture will effectively be off-limits.

These include marine reserves and areas originally identified in the Council's four-year-old Regional Coastal Plan as inappropriate for aquaculture, including:

- Whangarei Harbour
- The eastern Bay of Islands and inner Doubtless Bay
- Houhora, Parengarenga and Rangaunu Harbours
- Large parts of Kaipara Harbour

Cr Hill says the only real exemption to the 'AMA restriction areas' will be a provision allowing for small, non-commercial marae-based aquaculture proposals. However, even these will only be allowed if they can show they will have negligible impact on the important values of these areas.

She also says while the new provisions will protect important areas of Northland's coast, there will still be many parts of the region that are potentially available for aquaculture.

In these potential areas, the plan contains robust provisions to guide decisions and should give both would-be marine farmers – and the community at large – a great deal more certainty

The Hearings Committee's decisions will now be notified and a summary of the decisions provided to every submitter. The decisions are then open to appeal by those submitters until 9 June.

The decision also reconfirmed that the 'Invited Private Plan Change' (IPPC) process will be the main way that AMAs are created in Northland.

Under this approach (adopted by the Council more than two years ago) would-be marine farmers – not Northland's ratepayers – will have to pay the costs of having areas zoned as an AMA.