

This report card is one in a series produced to explain the current state of Northland's environment. The cards are based on the 2007 State of the Environment Report and keep you up to date on the work being done to improve our environment.

Tāngata Whenua

Northland is rich in heritage and history, which bonds both Māori and non-Māori people together. Some of the oldest traces of Māori are found in Northland. Māori have a close relationship with and connection to Te Ao Turoa (the environment) and are heavily involved with the management of ngā taonga tuku iho o ngā tupuna (treasures handed down by our ancestors) in Northland.

The Resource Management Act requires Regional and District Councils to recognise and provide for the relationship of Māori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, water, sites, wāhi tapu and other taonga, as a matter of national importance. Councils must also have regard to kaitiakitanga, and take into account the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi (Treaty of Waitangi).



Lake Omāpere Trust members, volunteers and Regional Council staff collecting seed as part of the eco-sourcing programme to revegetate the Lake Omāpere foreshore.

Tāngata Whenua in Northland

The Northland region (Te Tai Tokerau) stretches from the uppermost point of New Zealand, North Cape (Ngāti Kuri), south west to Poutō (Ngāti Whātua) and eastward to Mangawhai (Ngātiwai and Ngāti Whātua). There are 12 iwi in Northland whose rohe or tribal boundaries fall either partially or entirely within the region.

In the 2006 census, 31.7% of the Northland population (148,000) identified themselves as Māori, compared to the national average of 14.6%.

Tāngata Whenua and the environment

The link of Māori to Ranginui and Papatuanuku show that they consider themselves part of a complete living system. The close attachment of Tāngata Whenua to their ancestral lands and resources stems from the belief in their common origins and from occupation of the land and use, which establishes tribal identity and continuity.

The wellbeing of the environment is entwined with Mana Māori and is a vital element in the identity and integrity of Māori. Therefore, the importance of the health of the environment and the management of activities that impact upon the natural resources are of great concern to Māori.

The concept of kaitiaki and kaitiakitanga (stewardship) is part of a set of holistic values: a spiritual system that is established through the long association Māori have with the environment.

Regional and District Councils have a legal duty to sustainably manage the natural and physical resources of the region and provide for Tāngata Whenua involvement in resource management, particularly where it appropriately affects and reflects these taonga.

The Council encourages Tāngata Whenua involvement in the management of Northland's natural and physical resources by:

- Providing for Māori representation on the two Council standing committees;
- Carrying out specific Māori consultation processes relating to resource management plans;
- Having policies that require circulation of all resource consent applications to Māori;
- Working together with Māori on significant environmental projects;
- Providing funding and advice to iwi/hapū on Environmental Management Plans;
- Working with and providing funding for joint iwi/Council monitoring projects; and
- Providing information on current issues to Northland Māori through regular pānui – newsletters.



The Council works with Māori on issues of significance. The Lake Omāpere project has involved extensive foreshore replanting.

Transport – what are the pressures on our environment?

The infrastructure needed to provide land transport networks in Northland can create pressures on our environment.

- **Public health and air quality** – dust caused by traffic travelling on unsealed roads can affect both human health and the environment;



- **Road runoff and water quality** – a number of factors relating to transport affect Northland's water quality. Vehicle emissions and pollutants in stormwater run off roads, car parks, bridges and culverts contributing to the contamination of freshwater resources;
- **Environmentally sensitive areas** – the effects on the natural environment of the land transport network are greatly increased at environmentally sensitive sites. Changing an environment to make way for land transportation leads to pollution, habitat loss and habitat fragmentation. There is also an adverse effect on landscape values and historic buildings and sites;
- **Spread of pests and litter** – pests are easily spread along the transportation network by both vehicles and people. In addition, roadside litter is common along most routes.

There are several challenges that limit the development of transport infrastructure in Northland:

- A low funding and rating base and socio-economic patterns within the region;
- Residents are spread across a wide area with very few transport alternatives, so people rely on private vehicles;
- A strong rural and manufacturing economy, based on pastoral farming, forestry and fishing, all of which rely on heavy commercial vehicles;
- Northland is a popular holiday destination with significant coastal development, which causes traffic congestion at weekends and during holidays.

The Council aims to sustainably manage the impact of people on our environment while allowing for ongoing development.

Transport

Northland's transport network covers 6530km of road, a rail link from Auckland via Whāngārei to Kawakawa, a natural deepwater port and commercial airports at Whāngārei, Kerikeri and Kaitiāia.

What is the current state of Northland's transport networks?

Northland has one of the highest rates of unsealed roads in the country. Of our 6530 km of road, 753km is State Highway with the remaining being local roads. Approximately 65% of these roads are unsealed, compared to the national average of 40%.

The present rail line extends from Auckland to Otiria. The line has speed restrictions and low tunnels which limits container size. There is currently no link to the Marsden Point deep water port, although plans for a line are underway and land is being designated for this purpose.

The public passenger transport system in Northland has bus, taxi and ferry services. There is one contracted public transport service in Northland: the Whāngārei City Bus Service, and numerous school bus routes.

There is one large port at Marsden Point, which deals mainly with raw timber product. There is provision at the port for vessels delivering crude oil to the refinery and for carrying cement products from Golden Bay Cement.

There are three commercial airports suitable for small commercial aircraft in the region: Whāngārei, Kerikeri and Kaitiāia.

What is the Council's response to the impact of transport networks?

The Council sustainably manages the impact of transport on our environment in a variety of ways.

Regulation

Northland's transport objective in the Regional Policy Statement is to maintain and enhance the safety and efficiency of our transport networks, while minimising adverse environmental effects.

The Regional Land Transport Strategy (RLTS) 2006-2016 also provides a planning framework for the development of land transport in the region for the next 10 years.

Monitoring

The Council monitors the environmental effects created by both transport infrastructure and modes of transport.

Provisions

Regional and District Councils are working to reduce the amount of stock effluent disposal onto the region's roads and roadside reserves through the introduction of more effluent disposal dumping sites.

Total Mobility is a nation-wide scheme aimed at assisting people with mobility impairments to become more mobile and active in the community. There is currently a scheme operating in Whāngārei and expansion into other areas is being looked at.



24/7 Environmental Hotline
0800 504 639

**NORTHLAND
REGIONAL
COUNCIL** 

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Waste management

The Northland Regional Council aims to minimise the impact of waste on our environment. Waste is any unwanted material discarded or discharged by its owner and this waste, particularly hazardous waste substances, can have a considerable impact on the environment.

What is the current state of Northland's waste management systems?

There are three waste disposal sites operating in Northland. Refuse not disposed of in Northland is transported to Auckland for disposal.

The environmental impact of both closed and operational landfills is monitored by the Council. Samples taken from landfills show that none of these sites is currently contributing any significant contamination to nearby waterways.

There has been an increase in the number of incidents of illegal dumping since 2003, which could be caused by the introduction of user pays disposal fees.



Hazardous waste collection – up to two tonnes of empty agricultural containers are collected a year.

Hazardous waste disposal is a major issue in Northland. There are approximately 40 different industries – in agriculture, horticulture and forestry – that use hazardous substances on a daily basis over approximately 500 sites. Hazardous waste must be disposed of to avoid any negative environmental or human health effects. More than 1000 contaminated sites are currently being investigated and levels of contamination assessed by the Council.

The options available for the disposal of waste hazardous substances in New Zealand are limited to low key substances, while the balance is sent overseas. Over a 14-year period, more than 64 tonnes of waste hazardous substances were collected from throughout Northland for disposal or recycling.

A total of 1026 incidents involving waste hazardous substances have been reported to the Council throughout the same period, the majority of which were oil, diesel or other fuel spills, of which 61% were marine spills.

Each year, between five and 15 tonnes of waste hazardous substances were collected for long-term storage, redistribution, pre-treatment and/or disposal. This includes insecticides and fungicides, persistent organic pollutants, solvents and laboratory chemicals, herbicides and empty chemical containers.

How to reduce waste

A three-way approach is needed to deal with waste disposal issues: reduction of wastes at source, reuse and recycling programmes, and improved methods of collecting, treating and disposing of what is left.



Illegal rubbish dumping has become a larger issue since user pays disposal fees were introduced.

Pressures on our environment

Waste disposal and management can create pressures on the environment.

- **Illegal disposal** – dumping of both household and other waste substances or illegal discharge of a contaminant create pollution and reduce the look of the environment;
- **Environmental incidents** – accidental discharge of waste hazardous substances – oil spills, petrol leaks, leachate or contaminated discharge – affect the environment and public health and safety; and
- **Storage and disposal** – there are environmental and human health effects from contaminated sites, and the storage and disposal of hazardous and other waste substances.



Plastic bottles collected for recycling.

Waste – what's being done?

Regulation

The Regional Policy Statement provides an overview of resource management issues in Northland, including waste management. All landfill and cleanfill sites must also comply with the rules in the Regional Water and Soil, Coastal and Air Plans for Northland.

Monitoring

Under the Resource Management Act 1991, most of the small rural tips in the region have closed and been replaced with refuse transfer stations, which have less of an impact on the environment. Three landfill sites still currently operate in the region. The Regional Council monitors the environmental impact of both closed and operational landfills on a regular basis.

Many of the industries in Northland that store and use hazardous substances are monitored on a regular basis by Regional Council staff to ensure that best practice is followed and health and safety standards are met.

Provisions

The Regional Council, along with PGG Wrightson Ltd, operate four depots throughout the region for the collection of agricultural chemicals and waste hazardous substances. All substances collected are processed and then placed into storage and transported to Auckland for disposal.

The Council also operates a mobile collection service to individual properties throughout Northland to recover chemicals that may be leaking, require repacking or are in a deteriorating condition.

The Council also promotes cleaner production schemes with local industry. Cleaner production aims to reduce costs by increasing efficiency, minimising raw material use, recycling and reducing waste and preventing pollution. It covers everything from the supply and use of raw materials and resources, to product design and waste management techniques.

Civil Defence Emergency Management

What can you do to help?

- **Be prepared** – www.nrc.govt.nz/beprepared
- **Be aware** – Be aware of hazard zones when purchasing or developing a property.
- **Text message alerts** – www.nrc.govt.nz/cdalert

Natural Hazards

Northland's exposure to natural hazards – earthquakes, landslides, fire, tsunami and volcanic activity – is relatively low, with the exception of flooding and weather hazards. Landslides are the next most significant threat in the region. The pattern of development within the region means these natural events may place human life, property and/or economic production at risk.

- **Weather hazards** – ex-tropical cyclones cause damage through extreme winds and heavy rain. Northland averages one ex-tropical cyclone passing nearby every year, putting it more at risk than the rest of New Zealand. Severe storms also cause localised damage and can catch communities unaware as they are often not well forecast.
- **Flooding** – this is the most common risk to Northland, threatening human life, disrupting communications and access, damaging property and reducing primary production.
- **Landslides** – landslides can be a threat to life and property. There were 17 significant landslides in Northland between 1996 and 2003.
- **Fire** – wildfires are a growing problem in Northland. There was a 55% increase in the number of wildfires attended by Northland's Fire Brigades from 2001 to 2005.
- **Earthquakes and volcanic activity** – earthquake risk in Northland is low, with no active faults mapped. There are two areas of past volcanic activity in Northland – Puhipuhi-Whangarei and Kaikohe-Bay of Islands. The most recent eruptions were 250,000 and 700,000 years ago, respectively.

What is being done to minimise the risk?

Civil Defence Emergency Management in New Zealand follows the four "R" framework of Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery. The Regional and District Councils, other organisations and communities in Northland carry out the following:

- **Reduction** – a full scale review of natural hazards in Northland has been conducted. The reports can be viewed at www.nrc.govt.nz/hazards. The Council is involved in river management schemes to reduce the incidence, frequency and duration of flooding. Coastal hazard assessments have been done over the last 20 years to determine coastal hazard zones that are included in District Plans, and help avoid or reduce inappropriate coastal development.
- **Readiness** – the Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group (CDEM) is legally required to develop and implement plans to reduce the risks associated with hazards. This is a partnership between the local authorities, emergency services and other agencies in Northland.
- **Response** – in the event of a civil defence emergency, the Council has the responsibility for providing the Northland CDEM Group Emergency Operations Centre (GEOC) in Whangarei. The GEOC coordinates the regional civil defence emergency response. A major role of the GEOC is to collate and disseminate important information to other key partners and the Northland community.
- **Recovery** – the CDEM Group also helps the community to recover from natural hazard events. The process of recovery is to re-establish the quality of life of the community following an emergency.

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