

Dirty dairy farmers fined

continued ...

Owners of dairy farms were responsible for infrastructure, which included any effluent disposal systems and they held the resource consents required to operate those systems.

"As the owner and holder of any resource consent, they should be aware of the consequences of an effluent system that is inadequate, or which is not operated appropriately. As the owner, they have the authority to intervene. They have the responsibility to intervene."

The regional council says the judge's decisions and fines send another clear message to dairy farmers that protecting water quality is important and effluent needs to be treated and managed in accordance with the law.

Operations Director Tony Phipps says prosecution is usually a last resort for the regional council, however, sometimes it was left with little option.

"In this case, there was a prolonged period of alleged effluent-related offending leading up to the decision to take the matter to court. Mr Pinny was given plenty of chances and warnings...some would say too many."

"This case is all the more disappointing because Mr Pinny is a very experienced farmer who I understand owns or operates more than a dozen Northland dairy and beef farms," he says.

Mr Phipps says abatement notices had been issued over alleged offences at the Awarua property in September 2006, in September 2007 and again in November 2008.

Similarly, an infringement notice (effectively a \$750 instant fine) had also been issued in September 2007 and another three notices in November the following year.

In July the council brought two more cases before an environment court judge presiding in the district court with both cases being successfully prosecuted.

Far North farmer, Mr Schluter pleaded guilty to one charge of discharging dairy effluent from a sump at a dairy shed which flowed approximately 15 metres downhill into the Aurere Stream. The effluent pump in the sump was not operating when the offence occurred.

Mr Schluter who has a long history of effluent-related offending, pleaded guilty to the charge and was convicted and fined \$25,000 for his actions.

JKD Farms Limited Maungakarama was fined \$26,000 for two offences where effluent was discharged to water via a stormwater diversion and for runoff from an irrigator which flowed overland into tributaries of the Tauraroa River.

The farm owner pleaded guilty to both charges which lead to subsequent conviction and fine. As with Mr Pinny and Mr Schluter, JKD Farms Ltd. also has a long history of non-compliance.

At the time of the court sitting, the council was awaiting hearings on the three other prosecutions. These will not be heard until November when an environment court judge returns.



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Purongo Putaiao

Issue 7 — August 2011

Welcome Nau mai haere mai

Kia ora and welcome to the latest edition of the council panui – Purongo Putaiao. We are half way through 2011, the council's Annual Plan has been finalised, the rewrite of the Regional Policy Statement is well underway and the council is seeking a new CEO; Northland is a busy place!

In June the council adopted its Annual Plan which sets out how and what we will do over the next 12 months. Projects from flood management to environmental education gained funding. For a copy of the plan call 0800 002 004.

Also in June CEO Ken Patterson finished his employment at Council leaving us to take up the role of Chief Executive for Tauranga City Council.

I would like to acknowledge Ken's contribution to Northland. He guided us through a period of significant change since taking up his position in 2007, one of which will see Northland host two Rugby World Cup games next month.

The council is currently in the process of appointing a new CEO. In the interim, Tony Phipps is acting CEO. Mr Phipps steps up from his role as Deputy Chief Executive.

He has a vast amount of experience having been with the council for a number of years as the manager in charge of Monitoring and Operations.



T. Phipps

20 schools share in \$20,000 awards

Projects from energy efficient olive harvesting to planting a sensory garden for a school's special needs unit are among 21 school initiatives to share this year's \$20,000 Northland Regional Council Environmental Curriculum Awards (ECAs).

Regional Council Environmental Education Officer Susan Botting says the annual awards aim to foster excellence in environmental education, with schools eligible for up to \$2000 each for their efforts to educate children in, about and for the region's environment.

This year's 20 recipients will receive between \$424 and \$1800 each for their 21 projects – one school has two projects. "Once again, this year's projects are impressive; both in their scope and their quality. Especially pleasing is the increasing role that students are playing in planning and designing them," Ms Botting says.

She says the ECAs recognise and support the environmental education efforts put in by more than 2000 Northland students (aged 5 to 18) in 132 classes and/or school student environmental groups. Six winning schools are based in the Far North, 10 in the Whāngārei district and three in Kaipara.

The winning schools are: Dargaville Intermediate, Huanui College, Kamō Intermediate, Karetu School, Kaurihohore School, Kerikeri High School, Okaihau College, Onerahi School, One Tree Point School, Ōpua School, Oromahoe School, Otaika Valley School, Oturu School, Parua Bay School, Ruakaka School, Ruāwai Primary School, Tangiteroria School, Totara Grove School, Umawera School and Whāngārei Primary School.

For more information on each project check out our website www.nrc.govt.nz/eca2011

Kei roto

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School environmental projects get funding

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A free workshop about weeds

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Derelict vessels are maritime hazards

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NRC assists with environmental education

Pictured right, Kamō Intermediate receives its 2010 Environmental Curriculum Award from Regional Councillor John Bain.

The school's decade-old environmental education project - Islands of Life - has enabled ongoing learning and involvement for a large number of students.



Wise up to weeds

Free weed workshops will be held in late August offering participants a chance to find out the nitty gritty on pest plants.

The three-hour workshops – put on by the Northland Regional Council and held in Kaitāia, Kerikeri and Whāngārei – will focus on how to identify some of Northland's top pest plants and how to get rid of them.

Northland Regional Council Biosecurity Officer Sara Brill, who is organising the workshops, says it's a chance to get up close and personal with some of our region's worst weeds.

"The workshops are for people who have wondered which weed is which, why weeds wander and what spray works on which weed," she says.

"Each workshop will include a short presentation, hands on identification and understanding control options including chemicals and other methods."

Two workshops will be offered each day over the four days. The times are: 9am to 12pm or 1pm to 4pm.

With workshops will be held:

24 August Kaitāia, – FNDC office, Redan Rd
25 August Kerikeri – Kingston House, 123 Hone Heke Rd
25 and 26 August Whāngārei – Northland Regional Council offices, Water Street.

Spaces are limited so registration is essential. To register contact the Northland Regional Council on 0800 002 004 and ask to speak to Sara Brill, direct dial (09) 4701162 or email: sarab@nrc.govt.nz

Let's
WISE UP TO WEEDS

Why do weeds wander?
Which weed is which?
What works on weeds?
Want answers?

Then register now for this **FREE** workshop!

Get up close and personal with some of the worst weeds in Northland and take control!

This is a **FREE** workshop provided by the Northland Regional Council and will focus on pest plants in Northland - how to identify them, how they are spread and how to control them.

Numbers are limited so **register now** for a workshop near you!

Workshop times:
9am-12pm or 1pm-4pm
Refreshments provided.

Kaitāia: Far North District Council
Redan Road
24 August

Kerikeri: Kingston House
123 Hone Heke Rd
25 August

Whāngārei: Northland Regional Council
36 Water Street
26 or 27 August

To register contact:
Sara Brill Pest Plant Officer
Phone: 0800 002 004 ext. 9162
Email: sarab@nrc.govt.nz
www.nrc.govt.nz/nasties

Putting Northland first

Dirty dairy farmers fined



Three Northland farms have been fined \$105,000 for offences relating to dairy effluent discharges with three more cases in progress.

Kerikeri man Mervyn James Pinny denied 16 charges laid against him by the Northland Regional Council relating to a farm he owns at Awarua, about 13km south of Kaikohe.

He defended the charges before Environment Court Judge Gordon Whiting with the case heard in the Whāngārei District Court over several days in December last year and January this year.

In a reserved judgment delivered recently, Judge Whiting convicted Pinny of four of the 16 charges the Regional Council had laid against him. The judge dismissed him without conviction on the remaining charges, which he ruled had effectively been alternatives to those he had convicted Pinny of.

Meanwhile, Pinny's farm manager, Hugh Raymond Bolton, who lives on the Awarua property, had earlier admitted three charges relating to the same incidents when he appeared in the Whāngārei District Court in June 2010.

Judge Whiting fined Pinny \$30,000 – and Bolton \$5000 – for offences relating to effluent discharges from an irrigator between 01 and 16 October 2009. The offending resulted in effluent discharging into an unnamed tributary of Te Ruakokupu Stream, as well as ponding at least 40cm deep in several depressions on the farm.

Pinny was fined another \$10,000 – and Bolton \$1000 – for similar offences relating to the same irrigator in a different position on 16 October 2009.

For offences relating to a cow standing pad – during which large volumes of effluent flowed into a neighbouring ditch and again reached a tributary of Te Ruakokupu Stream – between 8 and 16 October 2009, Pinny was fined \$14,000 and Bolton \$4000.

For a fourth offence relating to an abatement notice, Pinny was convicted and discharged without penalty. In his decision, Judge Whiting said owners of dairy farm properties could not escape their responsibilities via a contract with a farm manager.

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Abandoned vessels removed from canal



Maritime Officer Craig Gardner secures one of two abandoned boats prior to their removal from Waiarohia canal by Northland Regional Council staff recently.

Regional council staff have removed two derelict boats which have lain abandoned on the northern banks of Whāngārei's Waiarohia canal after concerns they could pose a risk to other vessels.

The two boats – a roughly 12-metre kauri-hulled vessel and an eight-metre wooden yacht hull – were removed by council staff after the vessels were formally declared 'wrecks' and potential navigational hazards by Regional Harbourmaster Jim Lyle.

The declaration came after lengthy and unsuccessful attempts to locate the vessels' owners – including posting notices on the boats themselves – following complaints from nearby Herekino Street businesses.

Mr Lyle says the larger vessel had apparently sat abandoned for several years, while the other had arrived within the past 12 months.

Both were in extremely poor condition and council staff shared local business owners' concerns that the unsightly boats could

break free the longer they were left and pose an environmental hazard and/or navigational risk to other craft in the canal/upper harbour.

Several council staff spent about five hours removing the vessels; cutting the boats into smaller sections for ease of handling, before the pieces were lifted onto trucks and taken to the Whāngārei District Council's Puwera landfill for disposal.

Mr Lyle says the council would attempt to recover the several hundred dollars worth of labour and other costs involved from the boats' owners when and if they are identified.

He says the council typically removes several abandoned vessels from around Northland each year. Depending on where they are – and the state they are in – removing them can be quite time-consuming and costly.

Meanwhile, he says two other vessels – one which had been regularly submerged at high tide – were removed recently by their owners from jetties on the opposite side of the Waiarohia canal.

Mr Lyle says those vessels – a roughly eight-metre launch and a 12-metre yacht – had also removal notices attached to them by council staff, after concerns they too could become a navigational/environmental hazard.

Council staff will continue to monitor the canal – and other coastal areas – for potential hazards such vessels could create. However, anyone with concerns about such craft should contact either the Harbourmaster's Office at the council on (0800) 002 004 or the council's 24/7 environmental hotline (0800) 504 639.

Budding environmentalists

Water quality, mangroves, estuary care and biodiversity are just some of the many topics covered in Northland Regional Council school visits.

Each year hundreds of students take part in the school visits which are organised as a result of requests made by schools for assistance to teach students about the environment.

During the past year more than 800 students from around Northland – ranging from year 1 to year 13 – have participated in these environmentally-focussed school visits.

Susan Botting, Northland Regional Council Environmental Education Officer, says the aim of the school visits is to build on existing understandings about the land, sea, air and water – the key ingredients underpinning the region's sustainable management.

Visits to schools are tailored to teachers' requirements and are part of a suite of Environmental Education opportunities offered by the council for Northland schools. To find out more go to www.nrc.govt.nz/forschools



Students from Poroti School learn about catchment management while students from both Raurimu and Whau Valley Schools learn about mangroves.