

our year in review

The following is a snapshot of our key successes and work this year.

Democracy and Corporate Services Group

Of the regional community outcomes the Democracy and Corporate Services Group of Activities primarily contributes to a prosperous Northland, sustainably managing Northland's natural environment; maintaining cohesive communities and retaining and enhancing Northland's regional identity. The recent decision to redirect the council's investment income to the Investment and Growth Reserve, described below and more fully on page 41 is an initiative predominantly aimed at improving Northland's economy.

A key performance measure for the Democracy and Corporate Services Group is the return on our commercial investments. With an annual target of 4.9% return on the total value of investment properties, we performed well under the current economic conditions by receiving 6.6%.

Redirection of investment income

As part of its annual planning process for the current financial year, the council sought public feedback on its plans to redirect its investment income. This redirection will see council move away from subsidising rates for council services to building a reserve to fund community projects that will increase Northland's economic performance and improve the environmental, cultural and social wellbeing of Northlanders. This will lessen the council's longstanding reliance on the investment income (much of it linked to our majority shareholding in the Northland Port Corporation) which has typically subsidised roughly one-third of the average rates bill. The council will redirect its investment income away from rates over a five year period, which means its service rate will increase on average \$17.80 (including GST) annually for each of the next five years. By the end of the first year the reserve will have accumulated \$1.38 million if no projects are selected for funding in that period.

Further information on the Democracy and Corporate Services activity, including the full performance measure reporting, can be found on pages 40-47 within the Activity section of this Annual Report.

CEO on the move

Former council CEO Ken Paterson tendered his resignation in April 2011 and left Northland to take up a new role as Chief Executive for Tauranga City Council in early July. Mr Paterson had led council staff since January 2007. He played a pivotal role in the broadening of the council's focus from largely environmental to one that also incorporates economic and infrastructural development, social and cultural matters.

He also led the reorganisation of the council's 142-strong workforce and was instrumental in the development of the Northland Events Centre. Deputy CEO Tony Phipps is filling in as acting CEO until CEO designate Malcolm Nicolson starts in late January 2012.

Regional Economic Development

Of the regional community outcomes the Regional Economic Development Group of Activities primarily contributes to developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland, a prosperous Northland, sustainably managing Northland's natural environment; maintaining cohesive communities and having educated and skilled Northlanders. Enterprise Northland www.enterprisenorthland.co.nz, the regional council's economic development agency, had the following workstreams in place during 2011-2012 to progress these outcomes: the major regional initiative involving the marine engineering sector; Rugby World Cup hosting and showcasing of Northland for the visitors and teams; sector projects for energy, digital strategy rollout, horticulture growth, restoration of Waikare oyster farms, aerial mineral survey; supporting the Māori Te Hiku O te Ika manuka project and several investment projects that are confidential in their commercial arrangements. We also support tourism promotion through the Northland Regional Council Community Trust's subsidiary Destination Northland Ltd www.northlandnz.com

In the current 2009-2019 Long Term Plan the council committed to developing a Regional Growth Programme and a growth management reporting framework to focus the regional council's resources and to give further direction to Enterprise Northland. Implementing specific action plans would follow in the subsequent years relating to the Long Term Plan. Prior to the 2009-2019 Long Term Plan the council had sought out specific economic and community development projects and had chosen to fund the Northland Events Centre in Whāngārei; the Marsden Point rail link property purchase and designation; the Kerikeri Sports Centre and the Dargaville swimming pool.

In 2009-2010 a Regional Growth Programme/Strategy was drafted and after council consideration the strategy was rejected as the programme/strategy was reliant on collaboration and partnerships with other key agencies including the district councils. At the time the unitary authority debate was underway with two of the district councils calling for the disbanding of the regional council. This tension between key parties was too great to form collaborative partnerships. In the period 2009-2011 the regional council chose to pursue individual economic projects with willing private organisations using existing resources within the council. In 2010-2011 a further investigative report into unlocking Northland's economic potential was completed and the council consulted on establishing the Investment and Growth Reserve in order to fund and/or invest in identified economic opportunities. We spent \$262,438 of the \$417,693 budget for the 2010-2011. The outstanding budget amount has been carried over to be used in the 2011-2012 year.

The Regional Growth Programme was a key performance measure for this group of activities. There were associated measures in latter years for the economic development activity and associated measures within the Regional Information and Engagement activity. The consequence to not progressing with a formal programme/strategy at this

time means the associated performance measures have not been achieved.

The next step is to focus our economic development efforts is to develop funding criteria for the new Investment and Growth Reserve and to develop some future milestones for the Economic Development activity in the new Long Term Plan for 2012-2022.

Further information on the Regional Economic Development activity including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 60-68 within the Activity section of this Annual Report.



Key infrastructure – Events Centre officially opened

One of the largest community infrastructure projects funded by your regional council in recent years – the Northland Events Centre – was officially opened by Governor-General Sir Anand Satyanand on 28 May this year.

Work began on the Okara Park, Whāngārei-based Northland Events Centre in early 2009. It was funded by \$13 million from the Northland Regional Council and \$3 million from the Whāngārei District Council. A subsequent \$2.5 million grant from central government was used to further enhance the multi-events centre, which hosted two matches during this year's Rugby World Cup.

The facility was completed by the regional council on time and under-budget with more than 80 percent of the \$18.5M project awarded to local businesses (actual spend was \$18,482,768). Contractor Argon Construction formally handed over the completed facility to the regional council in September 2010. In June this year, regional councillors finalised plans to officially hand over the centre to the Whāngārei District Council – which is administering it through an independent trust. The regional council has appointed a representative to the trust.

Build up to Rugby World Cup 2011

The local build-up to this year's Rugby World Cup (RWC) began in earnest in the 2010-2011 year with the council's regional economic agency Enterprise Northland playing a pivotal role, including providing a regional Northland 2011 co-ordinator. (Northland 2011 is the group co-ordinating the North's RWC 2011 planning and operational delivery. Its membership includes the Northland Regional Council, the region's three district councils and the Northland Rugby Union. It is also supported by local economic, sporting, tourism and business groups.) Funding expended in 2010-2011 was \$221,686 compared to a budget of \$269,000. A further \$297,901 is committed for the 2011-2012 financial year.

Regional council staff provided support and assistance to Northland 2011, including development of the Northland 2011 website www.northland2011.com and the popular 'Paint It Red' campaign. The website offers background information about the tournament, the teams visiting Northland and more on how you, your school, club, business or other group can get involved. Council staff also helped set up Northland 2011's Twitter and Facebook accounts: www.twitter.com/Northland2011 and www.facebook.com/Northland2011

Aerial minerals survey

Council's regional economic development subsidiary Enterprise Northland and GNS Science co-ordinated an extensive aerial mineral survey from funding secured from central government, the regional council (\$100,000) and the Far North District Council. The survey measured geomagnetic and radiometric data across the region. GNS Science is currently analysing the data to identify potential ore and water resources, soil types and unstable land.

Resource Management Planning

Of the regional community outcomes the Resource Management Planning Group of Activities primarily contributes to developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland, a prosperous Northland, sustainably managing Northland's natural environment; maintaining cohesive communities and enhancing Northland's regional identity. Through scanning the horizon, gathering information, analysing and advising we influence and work with others to develop council policy and positions. The new Regional Policy Statement (RPS), currently under development, will be instrumental in assisting the council and other agencies to deliver further progress on achieving these community outcomes as the new RPS provides an opportunity to review the current balance between use, development and protection of Northland's natural and physical resources. The RPS is designed to ensure the region's natural and physical resources are sustainably managed. Once completed other regional council plans (Water and Soil, Air Quality and Coastal Plans) and the district councils' plans will need to give effect to the objectives within the new RPS. This is a new legislative requirement giving more alignment and consistency across the region.

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A key performance measure within this activity was to review the existing Regional Policy Statement; consider the feasibility of combining regional and district resource management plans and to complete changes to the regional plans when required (from either legislation or council resolution). The feasibility study into a combined plan for the region was completed in 2009. The one combined plan had some merit but it required the political buy-in of all four councils. Given the political climate at that time the council decided to start the development of the new RPS. Once the new RPS has been notified (released for formal public submissions and hearings) a combined regional council planning document will be pursued. The new RPS is currently on track for notification in May 2012. Milestones for the combined regional council plan will be developed in the coming year for inclusion in the new 2012-2022 Long Term Plan.

Further details on the progress made in developing the new RPS is below. Further information on the Resource Management Planning activity including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 70-80 within the Activity section of the Annual Report.

Regional Policy Statement – a plan for the future

Work to develop a new Regional Policy Statement (RPS) has been the prime focus for council's planning department over the past year. Development of a new RPS is a significant project that will span several years and is usually undertaken every 10-15 years. A draft discussion document was consulted on in December 2010 with the public providing feedback on the various issues explored. Summaries of the submissions were published and have helped guide development of a draft statement. A report outlining the draft regionally significant issues to tangata whenua was finalised in June and presented to the Tai Tokerau Iwi Chief Executives group in early June. Drafting of objectives, policies and methods for the draft Regional Policy Statement was underway at year end with a draft document due for release for informal public consultation in late 2011.

Consents

The Consents activity primarily contributes to the following community outcomes: developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland; a prosperous Northland and sustainably managing Northland's natural environment. The activity includes providing advice to potential applicants and the processing of lodged consents.

A key performance measure within this activity is the efficient processing of consents as timeframes are important for developers and residents wishing to undertake a project or develop their business. The council issued 1284 resource consents (up 155 on the previous 12 months) for both industrial and private developments across the region.

Among significant projects processed during the year was the Whāngārei District Council's emergency sewage discharge from the Okara Pump Station. Despite the additional workload, the Northland Regional Council maintained an excellent performance record, processing 98 percent of consent applications within statutory timeframes.

Further information on the Consents activity including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 90-94 within the Activity section of this Annual Report.



Environmental Monitoring

The Environmental Monitoring Group of Activities primarily contributes to the following community outcomes: Northlanders are safe and healthy; developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland; a prosperous Northland; sustainably managing Northland's natural environment; maintaining cohesive communities and Northlanders having access to recreational and leisure opportunities. Water quality across the region has a high profile as an indicator of the region's wellbeing and has a significant focus within the council's monitoring efforts. As the only sub-tropical region in New Zealand and home to an abundance of coastline and harbours, having safe and accessible water recreational activities (including shellfish gathering) is important to Northlanders and our visitors.



Having safe water sources for drinking water and sufficient quantities for economic opportunities is a high priority for the council. The monitoring department provides invaluable information on our current situation and trend analysis on past data that is used by the planning and consents departments when revising plans and issuing consents.

We also maintain a 24/7 incident response service (0800 504 639), conduct environmental assessments of industrial and commercial sites, and maintain a register of sites with hazardous industries or activities. www.nrc.govt.nz/waste

Key performance measures within this activity were to meet New Zealand guidelines for river, groundwater, lake beach, harbour and estuary water quality; monitoring all the necessary discharge consents and taking enforcement action on significant non-compliance; responding to calls on our environmental hotline and providing an on-call 24 hour, seven day a week service for incidents involving hazardous substances. Progress with some of the water quality programmes and initiatives, including improved compliance rates for farm dairy effluent consents, is described below. The council's Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) is available on the council's website at www.nrc.govt.nz/amr and provides substantial information on the monitoring results and trends.

The environmental hotline handled 1057 calls during the year compared to 979 the previous year. The highest categories of incidents were similar to the previous year and included air pollution, burning or smoke-nuisance related. The majority of the reported incidents did not require significant follow-up, were the result of natural events, had only minor effects or were allowed under legislation and regional plan rules. This year 12% were referred to other agencies for action and seven percent had enforcement action taken by the regional council.

Further information on the Environmental Monitoring activity including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 96-115 within the Activity section of this Annual Report.

Water quality – still a top priority

Water is one of Northland's most precious natural resources and much of council's work revolves around it. Our rivers and streams provide habitat for a range of indigenous flora and fauna, as well as being an important water supply for communities, industry, horticulture and agricultural demands.

Northlanders also value our region's water resources for the important recreational, aesthetic and cultural values they offer.

Pollution enters rivers and streams directly from industrial discharges, and indirectly when rain creates runoff over the land, which then enters our waterways. Because our rivers are comparatively small, they have little capacity to dilute contaminants. As the majority of Northland's rivers flow into harbours rather than open coastline, poor river water quality can also affect the health of our harbours.

Water quality monitoring of rivers and streams is done at 35 sites throughout Northland as part of the state of the environment monitoring network. Water quality is monitored monthly for a range of properties such as bacteria and nutrients. Changes in the water quality of Northland's rivers and streams during the past year were:

Water clarity – water clarity measures how clear or cloudy the water is. Poor water clarity affects a river's suitability for swimming and stream life. In 2010-2011, water clarity improved at 17 sites and decreased at 11 sites. Once again, clarity was poorer in areas with a lot of erosion like the Utakura, Ruakaka and Paparoa Rivers and was typically worst after heavy rain. However, long-term trends show that there are improving trends for water clarity at 29 percent of sites with more than five years' worth of data.

E.coli bacteria – low levels of bacteria are present in freshwater as a result of natural processes such as plant decay. However, land-use practices and human activity can increase bacterial levels. Water contaminated by human or animal faeces may contain a range of disease-causing viruses, bacteria and protozoa. These can pose a health risk to swimmers, other recreational water users and from eating shellfish.

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In 2010-2011 *E.coli* concentrations improved at 18 sites and declined at five sites. We investigated five sites with consistently high bacteria levels to try to isolate where they were coming from. Initial results indicate the main source is herbivores. Where faecal contamination is from natural sources like birds little can be done to solve the problem. But when the source of contamination is non-avian, council staff liaise with landowners to discuss and implement land management options to ultimately reduce contamination. Further monitoring will continue in 2011-2012.

Nitrogen and phosphorous – both of these naturally-occurring elements are needed by aquatic plants and algae for growth. However, if too much nitrogen and/or phosphorous enters a river as pollution, it can lead to extensive algal growths which then impact on aquatic life.

When compared to the previous year, total Nitrogen concentrations improved at 12 sites and declined at nine. Long-term trends show that there are improving trends for total nitrogen at 18 percent of sites with more than five years worth of data. Total Phosphorus concentrations improved at 17 sites and declined at five sites. (The latter is partly due to Northland's phosphorus-rich sandstone and mudstone catchment geology which provides a naturally high background level of phosphorus to streams. However, long-term trends show improving trends for total phosphorus at 65 percent of sites with more than five years worth of data.)

Otaika pilot programme - helping prevent future over-allocation of water

More than 200 landowners in Whāngārei's Otaika catchment provided details of their water use in late 2010 and early 2011 as part of a pilot programme designed to ensure we don't over-allocate our region's water resources in future. Our rules allow people to take reasonable amounts of water each day for domestic, stock and other uses without requiring resource consent. However, we need to know – and record – the combined impact that both permitted takes and those allowed under resource consents are having on Northland's water resources; its rivers, streams, lakes and groundwater.

One of the main drivers behind the proposal is to make sure there's enough water available in future to ensure those already getting it as a permitted take can continue to do so. We sent out about 650 questionnaires to people living in the Otaika catchment in late 2010 asking them where they got their water from (including those on town supply), how much they took in an average day and what they did with it.

We chose the Otaika catchment as the location for our 'Sustainable Water Allocation Project' pilot because it's both relatively small – with only several hundred landowners – but also boasts a good mix of uses from domestic to horticulture and farming. Of the 200-plus responses, about a quarter got their water from river or springs and about a dozen from groundwater. The rest were either on tank water or town supply. We had estimated about four to six litres of water a second was being taken as a permitted use from the Otaika catchment, the results largely confirming that.

The National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) is now doing a study for us to establish ecological flows in the Otaika area. Once complete, this will allow us to determine how much water is available for further allocation. Any lessons learned from the Otaika pilot project could be rolled out to other areas on a catchment by catchment basis in future. The pilot project's budget was \$110,000 and we spent \$73,285.

Safe summer swimming

The Northland Regional Council has been monitoring bacterial levels at popular swimming spots over the summer months for more than a decade. This annual programme is a joint project between the council, the Northland District Health Board and Northland's three district councils and aims to let the public know how safe water is for swimming.

Some sites are not always safe as water can sometimes be contaminated with human or animal waste, especially after heavy or prolonged rain.

Monitoring of 61 coastal sites and 24 freshwater sites was carried out from November 2010 to March 2011. Results were posted on the council's website with colour-coded 'green', 'orange' and 'red' dots showing whether the sites were safe for swimming.

A total of 22 coastal sites were safe for swimming all the time. Another 21 were safe all but one time and another 16 on all but two of the times sampled.

Overall, fewer freshwater sites met the safe criteria for swimming 100 percent of the time in 2010-2011 compared to the previous year. (However, this was largely due to three major rainfall events. Increased runoff after these accounted for 35 percent of non-compliance.)



Four freshwater sites met the safe criteria all the time, two all but one time and nine on all but two occasions. Seventeen sites were investigated to find the source of faecal contamination. This revealed 14 were contaminated by wildfowl like ducks or gulls from time-to-time. Ten sites were contaminated by faecal material from herbivores, five with dog faecal material and two sites by human waste. Where the contaminants are herbivores council staff liaise with landowners to discuss and implement land management options to ultimately reduce contamination.

Compliance with resource consents

Under the Resource Management Act we have responsibilities for the control of activities that may have a negative effect on our environment. Activities like discharging a substance to air or water are controlled by rules in our regional plans, and if required, by resource consents. In order to make sure that activities are not having an adverse effect on the environment, we monitor compliance with these rules and the conditions of resource consents.

When an activity is monitored, it is graded according to its level of compliance. Activities can be:

- Fully compliant – within the rules or resource consent limits;
- Have minor non-compliance – some evidence of minor/actual, or potential for minor effect on the environment; and
- Significantly non-compliant. In these cases council can take enforcement action to stop an activity, or fine or prosecute a serious offender, and restore the affected area.

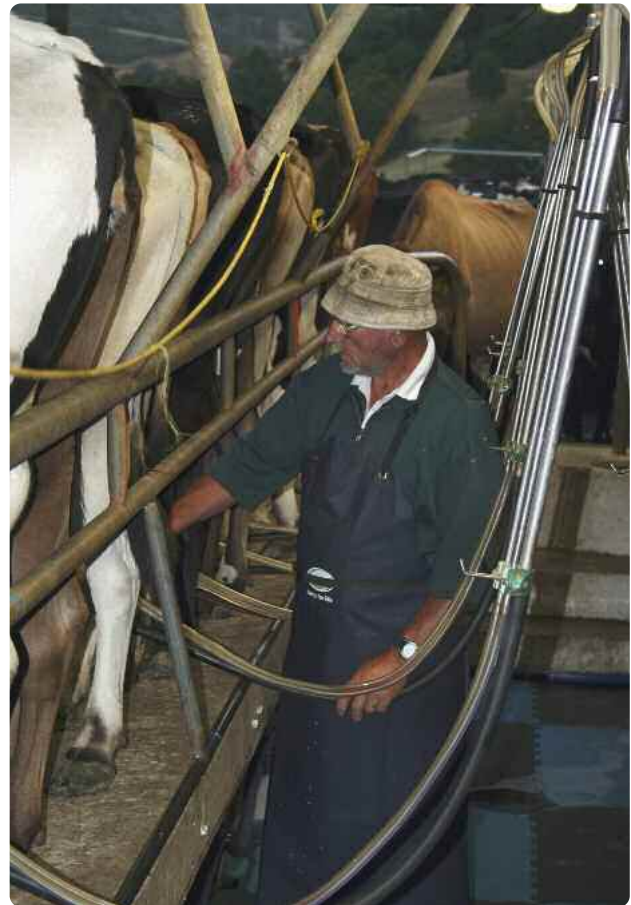
In 2010-2011, 65 percent of consents monitored were fully compliant (last year 66 percent), 24 percent had minor non-compliance (last year 25 percent) and 11 percent were significantly non-compliant (last year nine percent).

The council instigated four prosecutions – one for drainage and vegetation clearance in a wetland and three farm dairy effluent discharges.

Farm Dairy Effluent monitoring

The Farm Dairy Effluent (FDE) monitoring programme is the council's single largest compliance monitoring programme, accounting for almost 25 percent of all the activities we monitor. In 2010-2011 it had a budget of \$185,000 (with an actual spend of \$186,882). All farms are inspected at least once per season. Follow-up inspections are also made to all farms found to have significantly non-compliant discharges.

The aim of the programme is to monitor the effects of the approximately 13,000 cubic metres of farm dairy effluent produced daily during the milking season and protect water quality by promoting and enforcing compliance with standards set in resource consents and regional plan rules. The current FDE monitoring programme encompassing compliance monitoring, enforcement and the promotion of best practice is proving effective in gaining substantial improvements in farm dairy effluent management in the



region. There are now very few farms across Northland that have not upgraded or improved their farm dairy effluent treatment/disposal systems over the last five years.

The positive trend of increasing full compliance and decreasing significant non-compliance continued again last season. There has been an approximately six percent decrease in the number of significantly non-compliant farms over the last two years. Another positive trend for the consented farms is the increasing number of farms which now have hybrid systems (treatment ponds plus land application). This means less effluent is discharged to water. There are now about 250 consented farms with hybrid systems. All farm dairy effluent consents will be renewed between 2008 and 2011.

Non-consented farms

The grading system for the 2010-2011 monitoring season was changed. Previously, farms with no, or inadequate, contingency storage were graded minor non-compliant. However, in 2010-2011 farms that still had insufficient storage were graded as significantly non-compliant, affecting approximately 40 farms. At least a quarter of these farms have already made contact with regional council staff to get the dimensions required for pond storage and a number of storage ponds have already been constructed.

This monitoring season saw the issue of 138 abatement notices and 144 infringement notices (the latter carrying a \$750 fine). Three prosecutions have also been initiated.

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Biosecurity

The Biosecurity Group of Activities primarily contributes to the following community outcomes: a prosperous Northland; sustainably managing Northland's natural environment; Northlanders having access to recreational and leisure opportunities and retaining and enhancing its regional identity. Controlling pest animals and plants protects our native flora and fauna and the environment that is valued by Northlanders. Biosecurity is about protecting our environment, economy and way of life from the harmful impacts of pest animals, pest plants and diseases. The regional council works with other agencies and communities to control certain pests, remove others and identify new pests for attention. The method of pest control depends on the severity of the problem. Some pests are so well established we can only keep the numbers low; others that are less established can be isolated to certain areas and where the infestation is caught early we can aim to remove the pest altogether. The council works with landowners to target regional pest plants and animals and helps the rural economy by controlling possums to stop the spread of bovine Tb. www.nrc.govt.nz/nasties

Twenty-five projects to protect high value private forest from pest animals (possum, rats, mustelids and cats) were funded through the Environment Fund this year. We now have 36 Community Pest Control Areas established where neighbours and communities have banded together to control pests within a particular site. Both funding streams are incentives to get the community and private landowners involved in pest management as council resources alone cannot battle the problem in a sustainable manner.

A key performance measure for this activity was the five year review of the council's Pest Management Strategies and development of annual operational plans for each of the regional pests identified. The new strategies were completed in 2009-2010; the operational plans were developed during 2010-2011 and completed in August 2011. A new marine pest strategy was adopted and a

surveillance plan has been completed to guide future survey activities and monitoring. There were 24 pests added to the 2010-2015 Pest Management Strategies due to submissions and assessments by council officers and included: Exclusion plants – Asiatic Knotweed, Cathedral Bells, Holly-leaved Senecio, Purple Loosestrife; Eradication plants – Akebia, Climbing Spindle Berry, Mickey Mouse Plant, Mile-A-Minute, Monkey Musk, Royal Fern, Yellow Flag Iris; Community Pest Control Area plant pests – Blue passion flower and Green cestrum; Risk assessment plant pests – Norfolk Island hibiscus, English ivy, Fork-leaved hakea, Himalayan feather grass, Dusky coral pea, Lily of the valley vine, Chinese windmill palm; Suppression animal pests – Myna, Magpie; Risk assessment animal pests – Rainbow Skink and Caudo.

Further information on the Biosecurity activity including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 130-135 within the Activity section of this Annual Report. Progress on specific initiatives underway by the regional council, its funding partners and the community are summarised below.

Tackling pests - Community Pest Control Areas

The council works in partnership with local communities and industry to promote pest management and facilitate pest control. One of the more effective ways we can partner with our communities to tackle pests is through Community Pest Control Areas (CPCA).

There are now 36 CPCA plans underway in Northland which target pest ants, animals and weeds. These represent more than 800 owners and cover 32,675 hectares of private land involving individuals, community trusts and Māori shareholder land. The scheme requires a signed management agreement between the council and landowners in which the council agrees to the initial knock-down of pests and subsidises a share of the maintenance costs over five years. After the first year the landowner accepts an increasing share of the control costs so that by year six the community is maintaining the project using its own resources.





New tiny eco warriors battling for North

Unseen by all but a few, a host of tiny eco warriors is battling hard for Northland’s environment on our behalf.

Biological control is the use of naturally-occurring enemies and diseases to control pests and weeds. It’s not designed to eradicate a species but aims to keep populations at low levels.

In 2010-2011 further progress was made in establishing nursery sites for biological control agents, releasing and identifying new agents and nurturing existing agents in Northland. New Northland releases of weed biological control agents included three releases of the tobacco weed lacebug, two of the Tradescantia leaf beetle, and the release of the broom gall mite and the nodding thistle crown root weevil.

These have involved local landowners, conservationists and weed control groups, the Department of Conservation and the Northland Regional Council.

Working with the New Zealand Feijoa Association, we also secured \$16,450 funding from the Ministry of Agriculture’s Sustainable Farming Fund to help meet some of the initial costs of a trans-Tasman search for natural enemies of the guava moth. The larvae of this moth infest and ruin a range of soft fruit and nuts from Northland to the Waikato. The pip fruit, summer fruit and macadamia industries are also contributing funding towards the project – expected to take 12-18 months – as are the Waikato Regional and Auckland Councils.

Rice grass project shows promise

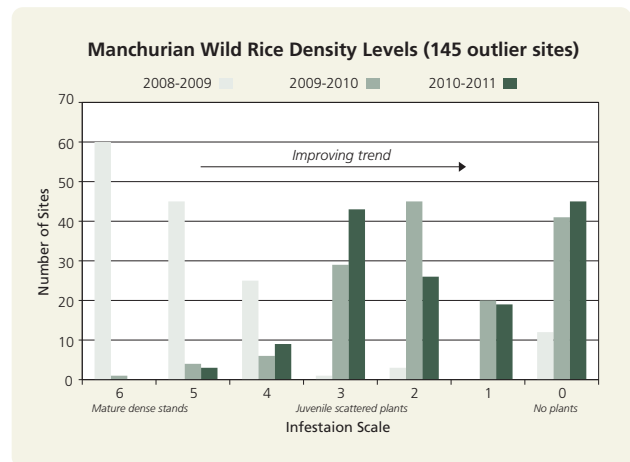
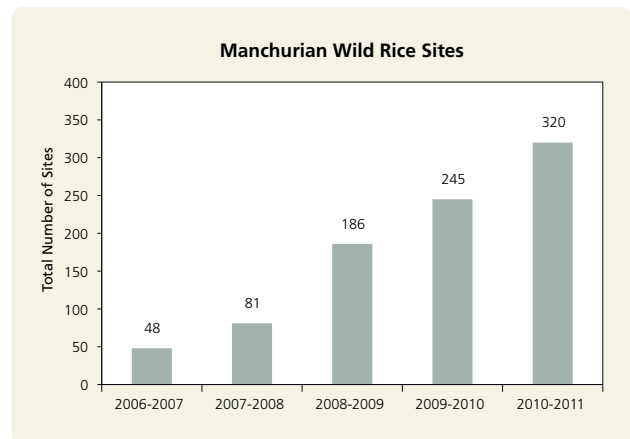
Another major council biosecurity project – and one now showing pleasing progress – has been the ongoing collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Biosecurity New Zealand (MAFBNZ) to contain Manchurian rice grass. The regional council’s budgeted contribution was \$246,002 for the year with \$270,763 spent. The overspend was offset with funding from MAFBNZ.

This plant is a major invader of wetlands, river margins and poorly drained pasture and has been recognised as a pest plant of national importance. It’s widespread in the Kaipara district and covers approximately 500 hectares, with the main infestation found next to the Northern Wairoa River and its tributaries.

Almost three years into the major \$1 million-plus campaign to tackle this pest plant, we’re beginning to turn the tide in our favour. There are now more than 300 individual sites covering approximately 90 hectares included in the programme. The early years of the programme targeted outlying sites first, to prevent further spread, before we began pushing into more heavily infested areas alongside the main rivers, streams and drainage canals.

This work involves spraying with herbicide in spring and autumn, mostly by ground-based contractors, with helicopters used where access is difficult. Four contractors who undertook control work during previous years were re-engaged and treated a large number of new sites this year, as well as carrying out follow-up spraying at all previously treated sites. (Once a site is included in the programme ongoing follow-up treatment is required for several years to ensure complete eradication).

Work has now progressed to the point where the programme can turn its attention to some of the more heavily-infested areas. In 2010-2011 control work included more than 1000 hours of contract labour and saw many thousands of litres of herbicide applied.



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Land and Rivers

The Land and Rivers Group of Activities primarily contribute to the following community outcomes: Northlanders are safe and healthy; a prosperous Northland; sustainably managing Northland's natural environment; developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland. The region's rivers can put homes, farmland, jobs, livelihoods and property at risk from flooding. We help communities protect themselves from the effects of flooding. The council's priority rivers project has been a significant focus since 2009 with river management plans being developed for each of the 27 identified priority rivers. The plans detail the current flood risk and identify options for reducing the risk. Implementing these plans will reduce flooding and the associated dangers and environmental problems associated with flooding. Progress on the river management plans made over the past year is described further below and further information on the plans is available on our website at www.nrc.govt.nz/floodplans

We encourage landowners to recognise the economic and social value of managing land in a way that will protect the resource and meet the needs of current and future generations. The Northland Regional Council works with landowners to develop sustainability and property conservation plans with rural community groups.

The council's Environment Fund, approximately \$500,000 each year, is used as incentive funding to assist landowners with sustainable land management projects and biosecurity projects in the following priority areas:

- Wetland and lake protection and enhancement.
- Soil conservation/erosion control, including the supply of poplar and willow.
- Water quality improvement, particularly in problem bathing water catchments that includes dairying and dry stock farm riparian fencing.
- Coastal, which includes the protection and enhancement of dunes, estuaries and salt marsh.

Landowners can only be considered for funding providing they agree to a three year maintenance agreement.



Key performance measures within this group of activities included the development of the 27 river management plans; implementing priority actions identified in the plans and managing the Awanui River Flood system. All 27 plans were completed by November 2010 (five months behind a very ambitious timeframe) and detailed risk reduction works for Kaeo/Whangaroa and Whāngārei CBD were identified and included in the 2011-2012 Draft Annual Plan in April 2011 for consultation with the respective communities. Investigations into managing flooding in the Kaihū River Valley were progressed with full designs expected for consideration in the Long Term Plan public consultation in March 2012. Works, including stop banks for Kaeo, were approved by the council and will be constructed in 2011-2012. Management outcomes for the Awanui River Flood system included surveying all stopbanks for the asset management plan, upgrading the hydraulic model of the scheme, completion of the annual maintenance works and an upgraded pre-feasibility study for the replacement of Donald Bridge. The annual maintenance works ensure the river is clear of obstructions to the flow of water, improving the efficiency of the river and reducing the risk of flooding.

Further information on the Land and Rivers Group of activities including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 116-129 within the Activity section of this Annual Report.

Flood protection and priority rivers projects

River management plans have now been developed for all 27 rivers or groups of streams in council's Priority Rivers Project. (The project aims to reduce the flood hazard risk in 27 priority rivers throughout Northland.)

The plans contain information relating to the catchment and flooding including:

- Catchment description.
- River modelling results, including flood maps.
- Flood risk management, including identification of high risk areas.
- Conceptual flood risk reduction options.

Council officers consulted with each affected community on the draft plans via a series of public meetings and hui throughout the region during September – November 2010. River Management Liaison Committees have been established for urban Whāngārei (Hātea and Raumanga Rivers), Awanui, Kaihū, Kaeo-Whangaroa Stream and Kerikeri-Waipapa. These committees have been assisting the council with the development, refinement and implementation of river management plans since their inception. These plans are the starting basis for implementation of flood risk reduction measures.

Soil conservation programme set up

Council's ongoing Priority Rivers Project has been the catalyst for a number of soil conservation initiatives this year. While the rivers project mainly centres on the prevention of flood damage, it also identified a need for erosion control and sediment management in those areas.



Work has included mapping areas of high erosion risk as well as identifying soil conservation and erosion/sediment control issues and options to deal with them.

Staff also assessed the effectiveness of past soil conservation and sediment/erosion control initiatives and identified opportunities for improvement. These include:

- Focusing resources on priority clusters of erosion-prone land via a soil conservation plan approach.
- Identifying other high priority soil conservation catchments outside Priority Rivers areas.
- Improved promotion of soil conservation and erosion/sediment control generally.

We also introduced a new soil conservation funding stream through our Environment Fund and produced several new soil conservation brochures.

Environment Fund

Council's Environment Fund has provided more than \$3 million since 1996 to help people improve and protect Northland's natural environment.

A total of 57 Environment Fund projects were completed in the 2010-2011 financial year using council funds of \$519,191. Twenty of those projects were from the Far North, attracting 38 percent of the funding, another 21 were from the Whāngārei district (37 percent of funding) and the remaining 14 projects (attracting 25 percent of funding) from the Kaipara.

The most popular projects during 2010-2011 were fencing (primarily of streams and wetlands to improve water quality and ecosystems), biodiversity, soil conservation and erosion control.

In order to improve accessibility, changes were made in the 2009-2010 year which means people can now apply for funding for worthwhile projects almost year-round, rather than inside a previously much smaller 10-week application window. This change proved very popular in the 2010-2011 year and it's hoped it will give additional support for reaching the Dairying and Clean Streams Accord's targets, particularly for water quality.

Poplar pole partnership

In June the council was able to announce half the estimated 4000 poplar poles needed annually for Northland erosion control work were expected to be sourced through new partnerships between it and a number of local growers throughout Northland. Alternative supplies were needed after Northland's only specialist poplar nursery at Parakao, northwest of Whāngārei closed. The closure left locals – and the regional council – looking for an alternative supply of poplar poles. The council called for expressions of interest from people interested in working with it to develop a local source or sources of poles earlier this year.

As well as helping to prevent erosion, poplars provide timber, good shelter and stock fodder and can remove pollutants from the soil. Soil conservation projects are one of several funding streams given priority through the Environment Fund, which sees the council meet up to half the costs of qualifying projects.



Mangrove management

After strong public support in last year's annual plan, council began work to identify and support the active management of mangroves in areas where they are negatively impacting on flooding, drainage and amenity values. The council provided \$120,000 to support community-led initiatives (\$53,000 spent in 2010-2011 with the remainder carried over for completing the projects in 2011-2012).

Ten projects have been either partly or fully funded for support with assessments of the environmental effects and resource consent application costs. For the projects that successfully go through the programme and are granted resource consent for the removal of mangroves, it is expected that the communities benefiting from this work will pay for the actual physical removal of mangroves in their area.

The council intends to assess the effectiveness of this programme before considering any further funding to similar future programmes. An update will be provided in the 2012-2022 Long Term Plan.

our year in review continued

Emergency Management

The Emergency Management Group of Activities primarily contributes to the following community outcomes: Northlanders are safe and healthy; developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland and maintaining cohesive communities. The Northland Regional Council co-ordinates the Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management Group for the region. We work together to minimise the potential effects of emergencies, prepare ourselves and the community, respond to emergencies and help the community to recover. During this year tsunami sirens have been installed along areas of the coast from Mangawhai to Bland Bay as a valuable tool to warn residents of impending danger. The Emergency Management department works closely with the hazard management department and the transport sector to identify potential hazards and areas for improvements.

Key performance measures within this group of activities included debriefing after each emergency and co-ordinating training and exercise programmes for all involved agencies. The debriefings are invaluable in continually improving our response to an emergency and our communication procedures.

Further information on the Emergency Management Group of activities including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 136-141 within the Activity section of this Annual Report and further information on this activity can be found on our website at www.nrc.govt.nz/civildefence

Emergency management – tsunami, real and fictional

Regional council staff were involved with a number of tsunami-related incidents over the past year. These included alerts and a Civil Defence response here in March this year in the aftermath of the earthquake and tsunami which devastated Japan, as well as taking part in the national tsunami exercise 'Tangaroa'. Based on a fictional South American tsunami, the exercise tested the skills of more than 90 local and national agencies in October last year. This included the activation and resourcing of the Northland Civil Defence Emergency Management (CDEM) Group (administered by the Northland Regional Council) and local emergency operation centres at all four local authorities across the region.

Lessons from this training – as well as previously developed tsunami inundation maps and community response plans – were put to good use in March this year after the Japanese tsunami. Northland's response to the Japanese tsunami marine warning on 11 March was well co-ordinated and managed, with the public generally taking appropriate action in response to the public information messages. The tsunami was linked to unusual currents and tidal movements in Northland over several days.

The Northland CDEM Group also helped fund a network of 70 tsunami sirens – most along the shores of the Whāngārei district – to warn coastal communities of likely tsunami.

The first siren was installed at Ngunguru in March 2011 and the initiative will compliment a similar network of about



Whāngārei District Council photograph

40 sirens to be established by the Far North District Council in future. The idea for the sirens had its genesis several years ago through the CDEM Group, whose members include the region's three district councils, the Northland Regional Council, emergency services and lifeline utilities.

The \$170,000-plus Whāngārei network is jointly funded by the CDEM Group and the Whāngārei District Council, with significant support from Northpower which installed and connected the sirens and provided power at no cost. The system was successfully tested in early June and was to be tested again in the lead up to daylight savings in late September.

Get Ready Get Thru

We also produced an eight-page Civil Defence-themed magazine 'Get Ready Get Thru – your guide to staying safe in Northland' and sent it to tens of thousands of homes throughout Northland in June this year.

The document – developed in association with Whāngārei's Scene Magazine – contained information on being prepared for any disaster including tsunami and flooding. It was largely funded by the Earthquake Commission (EQC) and other members of the CDEM Group.

Christchurch earthquake

The Northland CDEM Group's Welfare Advisory Group had an active role helping with the welfare needs of Christchurch residents relocating here (either temporarily or permanently) after the area's earthquakes. In total there were 267 people (including children) registered in Northland. Of these 12 were renal patients receiving dialysis under the care of the Northland District Health Board. Northland schools also received about 50 extra students who had either relocated with parents or caregivers or were staying with relatives.

Shared Civil Defence services

In June the Northland Regional and Whāngārei District Councils agreed to house the district council's new Civil Defence Officer within the regional council-based Northland CDEM office. We're now planning to review the current response and Emergency Operations Centre arrangements to see whether it's viable to share further services.

Drought ended – by a cyclone

The Government officially declared Northland as being in the grip of a drought on 8 December 2010. It was the second official drought of 2010 and came after the driest spring on record. The Northland Drought Committee was reactivated to work with the Government and Rural Support Trust to co-ordinate a regional drought response and recovery. (Committee members included representatives of local and central government, rural support groups, the agricultural and horticultural industries, animal welfare organisations and the financial sector).

Fortunately, the second drought's impacts were much less severe than the previous summer's event and its grip eventually ended in dramatic fashion in late January 2011 with the arrival of Cyclone Wilma. Wilma dumped huge amounts of rain across much of Northland, some eastern areas receiving up to 280mm, roughly three-quarters of that falling in just seven hours. This resulted in widespread flash flooding with many landslides and road closures.

Transport

The Transport Group of Activities primarily contributes to the following community outcomes: Northlanders are safe and healthy; developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland; a prosperous Northland; we have cohesive communities. The regional council is involved with transport planning, co-ordinating road safety initiatives and managing public transport in order to achieve an affordable, integrated, safe, responsive and sustainable land transport system for the region.

Key performance measures within this group of activities included reducing the number of road deaths as a result of motor vehicle accidents and effectively managing the Total Mobility scheme in Whāngārei. Road deaths significantly decreased in the past year going from an average of 30 for the previous three years to 14 in 2010-2011. More details on road safety initiatives are below. Total Mobility is a nationwide scheme designed to increase the mobility of people who have difficulty using public transport. Eligible clients get 50 percent discount on door-to-door transport (usually by taxi) in urban areas. We exceeded the target customer satisfaction level with 80 percent satisfaction and maintained the target volume of trips of 35,000.

Further information on the Transport Group of activities including the full performance measure reporting can be found on pages 82-89 within the Activity section of this Annual Report.

Road safety

The road safety partners have been instrumental in achieving excellent results in recent years in raising road safety awareness and assisting in substantially reducing the annual fatal crash rate and cutting hospitalisations for serious injury across the region. The 2010-2011 financial year saw 14 fatalities on Northland's roads, a 30 year low. Road safety initiatives in the last 12 months included:

- An elevated profile throughout the region with two new fortnightly road safety columns developed in the Whāngārei Report and a new six-monthly Regional Road Safety newsletter produced.
- Coffee Brake promotion extended from eight cafes to 23 and an increase in sponsors (milk and coffee suppliers) from seven to 17.
- Northland Road Freight Cluster Group – acknowledged as one of the most effective working groups of its type in NZ at a similar group meeting in Auckland recently – new radio advertisements regarding heavy vehicles developed and aired regularly on radio during last four months.
- New Safe Beach Driving signage developed and deployed around Northland's coastal areas.
- New Safe Beach Driving brochure developed.

Stock truck effluent disposal facilities

Design works commenced for the Whāngārei district site in Kauri with consultation underway with the landowner. Construction is dependent on the availability of local and national funding. The Kaipara district site is using a privately owned facility in Dargaville with signs erected in July to alert passing stock trucks. A new facility has recently been constructed at Pakaraka in the Far North.

Passenger Transport

Since January 2011 the CityLink Whāngārei bus route through Onerahi includes a stop at Whāngārei Airport. While the bus service timetable was not altered to specifically meet arriving/departing flights (service currently met by taxi and shuttle operators) the bus service simply offers an alternative means to get to the airport and back for those who want it.



our year in review continued

Maritime

The Maritime Group of Activities primarily contributes to the following community outcomes: Northlanders are safe and healthy; developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland; sustainably managing the natural environment; a prosperous Northland; retaining and enhancing our regional identity and Northlanders having access to recreational and leisure opportunities. We look after the navigational safety of all vessels in our region's harbours – from Kaipara in the south to Pārengarenga in the north – and around the regional coastline. We also encourage safe boating behaviour and we are ready to respond in the event of a marine oil spill. Maritime services are important in keeping our harbours safe for all users and the environment because we receive large oil tankers, cargo ships, cruise ships and fishing vessels and are the most popular recreational boating region in New Zealand. The council provides and maintains navigational safety equipment around the region, pilotage services in the Bay of Islands, mooring management, water safety advice and response to oil pollution incidents.

A key performance measure within this group of activities includes the maintenance of navigation aids (beacons, bouys, lights and signage). A six-year rolling maintenance plan is followed and this year maintenance included work in the upper Kaipara Harbour, home to several dozen navigation aids, had its general maintenance undertaken in March 2011. This work included the installation of several new buoys especially designed for strong current areas, as well as a new five mile LED light at Poutō Point and investigation of an uncharted rock in the Hargreaves Basin. The capital expenditure budget was \$60,500 and we spent \$33,156; the operational budget for harbour maintenance was \$75,409 and we spent \$53,739.

Further information on the Maritime Group of Activities, including full performance measure reporting, can be found on pages 142-148 within the Activity section of this Annual Report and further information is available on our website at www.nrc.govt.nz/onthewater



Our marine environment

The 2010-2011 year was once again a busy 12 months for council's maritime team. A hydrographic survey of the Whāngārei Harbour was completed in May 2011, surveying all the main channels including the Hātea River to the Town Basin (regional council's contribution was \$18,000). The survey showed there had been some shallowing in parts of the upper harbour. Dredging of the Hātea River will take place in a partnership between the regional council, Whāngārei District Council and the Whāngārei Marina Trust, with input from some other stakeholders. The Hātea River Working Group is managing the project.

A tsunami system for communication with key players was developed and tested at the main port for safety of shipping. A joint equipment deployment exercise was undertaken at Northport for the oil spill response team and port responders. Large skimmers, portable booms and the spill recovery vessel were part of the exercise. A total of 23 reported marine oil spills were responded to during the 12 months to 30 June 2011.

Regional Information and Engagement

The Regional Information and Engagement Group of Activities primarily contributes to the following community outcomes: Northlanders are safe and healthy; developing sustainable infrastructure within Northland; sustainably managing the natural environment; a prosperous Northland; residents are educated and skilled; Northland has cohesive communities and retaining and enhancing our regional identity. The council has funding available to assist with a variety of eligible environmental, educational and cultural initiatives undertaken by the Northland community. Regional council funding and advice is available to all individuals, landowners, community groups, schools and iwi throughout the region www.nrc.govt.nz/funding

Specialist council staff host seminars and field days designed to educate Northlanders about a variety of topics linked to the environment, while others visit schools to deliver environmental education initiatives. We also produce a wide range of publications and self-help guides covering most aspects of our work www.nrc.govt.nz/schools and www.nrc.govt.nz/publications

Key performance measures within this group of activities included the awareness of the community of regional council services, promotional material and providing real-time environmental data on the council's website. Awareness has remained steady since last year with an average awareness rate of 80 percent of our main functions. Twenty-eight publications were updated and released during the year covering a wide range of the council services and projects. Real-time data that is currently updated automatically includes river levels and rainfall (every two hours) and the Kaeo River webcam (every four hours).

Further information on the Regional Information and Engagement Group of activities, including full performance measure reporting, can be found on pages 48-59 within the Activity section of this Annual Report.



Extending our reach

We use a range of ways to communicate information about our activities to the community. Social media – like Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook – is an ever-increasing communications medium that now has an incredibly wide reach.

We joined Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook in 2009-2010 and now send live updates from our monthly meetings as well as information about job vacancies, events, consultation and local service information. Customers to our website subscription service increased by 21 percent compared to the same period the previous year. Newly introduced website services had the following increase in usage – e-payments 89 percent; Twitter followers 115 percent; Facebook fans 303 percent.

For more information go to:

www.nrc.govt.nz

<http://twitter.com/NRCexpress>

www.facebook.com/NorthlandRegionalCouncil

www.linkedin.com/companies/northlandregional-council

The council's newsletter to Northland ratepayers, the Regional Report, was sent to more than 60,000 households three times during 2010-2011. (A fourth edition was prepared late in the 2010-2011 financial year and distributed in July 2011.) It features articles about the council's projects and some of the people in our community, who we work with. We also produced/updated a range of publications: CoastCare Code; Regional Policy Statement Discussion Document; Annual Monitoring Report 2009-2010; Looking after your household sewerage system; Tide Tables 2010-2011; Working safely with the Northland Regional Council; CoastCare News Issues 8 and 9; Newsletter to Dairy Farmers Issues 2, 3 and 4; 30 Year Transport Strategy for Northland; pest animal brochures – magpies, mustelids, feral cats, rabbits and possums; pest plant brochures – ground cover plants, climbing plants, and trees and shrubs; Sustainable Land Management fact sheets – Erosion in Northland, Farm tracks and maintenance, and Poplars and willows; Regional Policy Statement Report Cards (15); Regional Policy Statement Stakeholder newsletter; Boating in Northland; Regional Pest Management Strategies; Resource Consent brochures – After the decision, Have your say, Your resource consent.

In our community

The council presented the Annual Sustainable Development Award at the Northland Business Excellence Awards in October 2010. We also helped with the Ballance Farm Environment Awards (including displays and information and presenting the Water Quality Award) at the awards evening in Paihia in March. Staff also assisted at the awards' Supreme Winners field day in mid-April.

Council also sponsored the Northland Dairy Industry Awards ceremony held in March. A wide range of shows and field days were also attended by council staff including Waimamaku Wild West Festival in February, Northland Agricultural Field Days in March, Kerikeri Envirofest in March, Northland Boat Show in March, Hutchwilco Boat Show in Auckland in May, Matariki Planting Day in June 2011 and the Matariki Freshwater Eel display at KiwiNorth in June.

The Education and EnviroSchools team visited schools throughout the region to promote our education programme. As part of their annual plan deliberations for the 2011-2012 year, councillors agreed late in the 2010-2011 year to cover a \$130,000 (excl GST) shortfall left by the withdrawal of Government funding for the EnviroSchools programme. There are now more than 50 Northland schools in this popular programme, which encourages student-driven action based on sustainable management of resources across all areas of school life. The extra funding in the 2011-2012 Annual Plan will be used to fund the ongoing work of two Northland-based facilitators.

The 15th annual Regional Youth Summit was held in Whāngārei in November 2010. Nineteen schools shared the \$20,000 annual Northland Regional Council Environmental Curriculum Awards presented in August and September 2010.

