

# Brief Updates





## BRIEF UPDATES

This part of the State of the Environment Report Update provides a brief commentary on a number of ongoing investigations and projects that have been previously reported but which are ongoing or not yet completed e.g. landscape planting on the Wairau Plain, Southern Valleys irrigation scheme. An overview of a new project, a study on the Rural 4 Zone, is provided and an update on legislative changes for aquaculture activities and on progress of the government's Oceans Policy is also included.

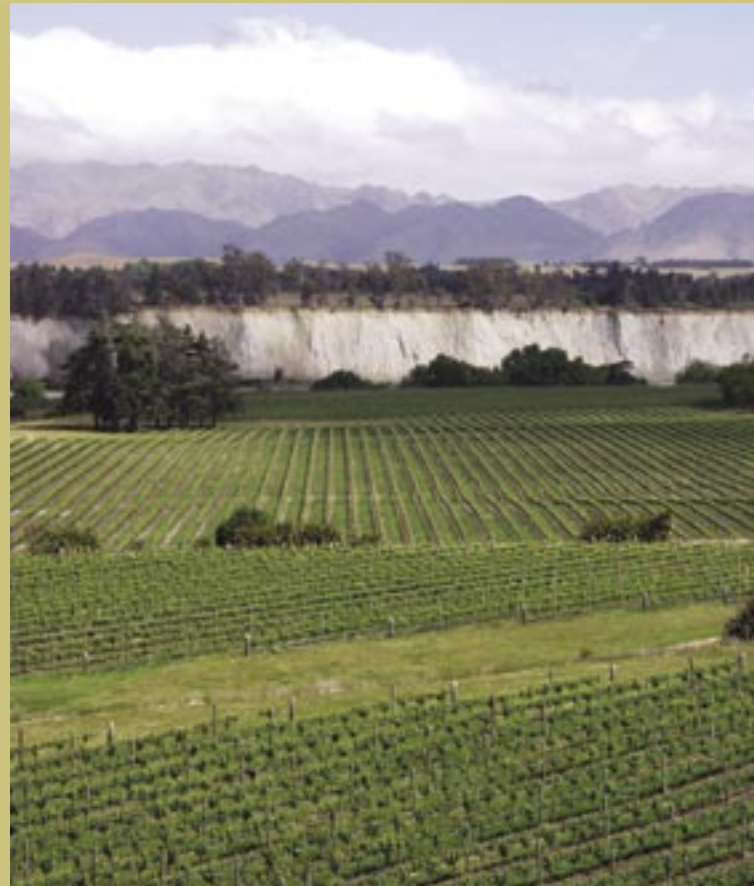
*Mill Stream monitoring*

## RURAL 4 ZONE STUDY

The Rural 4 Zone includes all of the rural land outside of the Rural 3 Zone (Wairau Plain) in southern Marlborough - under the Proposed Wairau/Awatere Resource Management Plan. In recent times the development pressures on the Rural 3 Zone have meant that this is where the Council's and the community's attention has been focussed. However, there are also mounting pressures on the natural and physical resources of the Rural 4 Zone, including for rural residential lifestyle living, viticulture expansion and water availability.

The Council has therefore begun a review of the policy framework for this Zone as a result of these growing pressures. Additionally, the current policy review of the Rural 3 Zone will have flow-on implications for other rural land that needs to be considered by the community.

*Awatere Valley - viticulture development*



## LAND STABILITY

A student grant has been given to Sabine Hartig of Victoria University for an honours dissertation investigating debris flow in catchments of the Marlborough Sounds. The impacts of the flows on the fans resulting from the debris flow were investigated because this is where a lot of residential development takes place within the Sounds. The work was carried out early in 2004 and the report is expected later in 2004.

*Example of unstable land.*



## EFFORTS CONTINUE ON RETURNING TREES TO THE WAIRAU PLAIN'S LANDSCAPE

As reported in the 2002/2003 Update, the Council has formed two working groups to look at implementing the "Wairau Plain Landscape Concept Guidelines".

It is pleasing to report that both groups have been working enthusiastically on this project since July 2003. The two groups meet monthly (both singularly and together), and look for ways and means to progress landscape development and improvement and to encourage the general message about the benefits of including landscape as a factor in managing rural land in the Wairau Plain.

The Public Land Working Group (administered by the Council), which is promoting landscape opportunities on public land, is progressing work on a number of sites on river margin, road reserve and general reserve land.

The Private Land Working Group (also administered by the Council) aims to promote landscape enhancement on private land. It has developed an implementation strategy, which has given direction to "getting the message out there" and is also providing support and guidance for private land landscape initiatives.

Copies of the "Wairau Plain Landscape Concept Guidelines" are available free of charge from the Council's offices. The document may also be viewed on, or downloaded from, the Council's website.

*Landscape plantings*



## AQUACULTURE

Central government delayed the introduction of the Aquaculture Reform Bill into Parliament until issues over the relationship of Maori with the coast and the ownership of the seabed and foreshore in terms of the Foreshore and Seabed Bill, had been advanced. Due to the delay in introducing the new legislation, the moratorium placed on aquaculture by central government prohibiting applications for new marine farms, was extended to 31 December 2004.

At the time of preparing the 2003/2004 Update report, the Bill had just been introduced into Parliament and was advancing through the public submission phase. It is intended that the legislation will be enacted to coincide with the expiry of the moratorium. When the final form of the legislation is known, the Council may need to undertake changes to its resource management plans to be able to comply with the new legislation. If there is a need to change the plans, the Council will be talking to a lot of groups with interest in marine farming before any changes are made to the existing provisions.

*Mussel floats*



## **OCEANS POLICY**

Development of an Oceans Policy was reported in the 2002/2003 Update. The policy was initiated by central government in June 2000 to help New Zealand manage conflicts between the different management regimes covering the coastal area, and to provide an overarching framework within which to manage New Zealanders' interaction with the marine environment. The framework was intended to provide a clear statement of what New Zealanders, individually and collectively, value about the sea and coastline, and what relative priority should be attached to different uses at different times and in different places.

However, progress on furthering development of the policy has been delayed until the Government's proposals

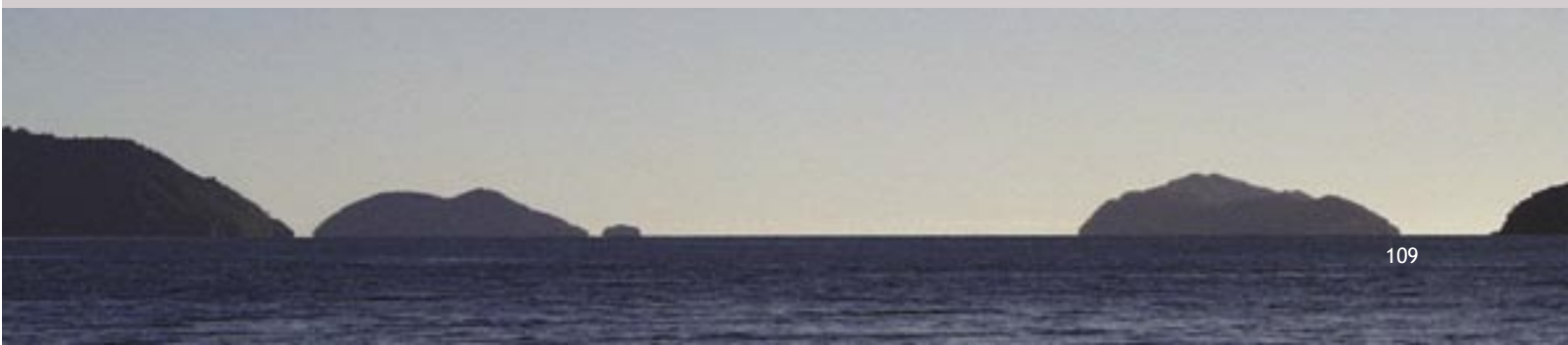
for protecting public access and customary rights to the foreshore and seabed have reached some conclusion. Nationwide consultation on the proposed Oceans Policy package was meant to have occurred through 2004, but this appears to have been further delayed to take account of government decisions on public access and customary rights.

## **ADMIRALTY BAY DUSKY DOLPHIN POPULATIONS**

The Council has continued to support the ongoing research of dusky dolphins in Admiralty Bay, carried out by the University of Texas, under the supervision of Professor Bernd Würsig. Each year, some 200 dolphins from the Kaikoura population winter over in Admiralty Bay, mainly between July and September, however, it has recently been established that the dolphins also use the bay at other times of the year.

This will be the fourth year that the Council has been involved in the project, which has so far carried out photo identification of individual animals and surveyed foraging, feeding and other behavioural characteristics of the population whilst in Admiralty Bay.

It is evident that one of the important attractions of the bay to these animals is the abundance of baitfish. Several collective feeding episodes have been observed, where numbers of dolphins herd fish into 'feed balls'. It is also interesting to note that a considerable number of individual dolphins return to the bay each year.



## EFFECTS OF SHIP WAKE IN THE MARLBOROUGH SOUNDS

The Council's investigations and research into the effects of wake from ships operating in the Marlborough Sounds have been regularly reported in the State of the Environment Report Update for the past few years. An assessment of the results from these investigations (as well as other work) reached a point where the Council believed that a variation (or change) to the Marlborough Sounds Resource Management Plan was appropriate.

The changes to the Plan, which were publicly notified in late 2002, were a mix

of rules and other methods. The rules do not stop ships operating, but measures were put in place to ensure that coastal ecosystems, public safety, iwi values and quality of life are protected. This was considered important as the use of larger, and faster ships is likely, which means that there may well be greater uncertainty about the nature and scale of environmental effects generated by shipping activities in the future.

At the time of preparing this Update, the Council had held hearings on the variation but had not released its decisions on the submissions received. It is anticipated that the decisions will be released later in 2004 or in early 2005.

In the meantime, and since the variation to the Marlborough Sounds Resource Management Plan was notified, monitoring of shoreline profiles has continued. Ecological assessments of benthic communities, in response to the introduction of the 18 knot speed restriction through the Navigation Bylaw 2000, have also continued.



## SOUTHERN VALLEYS IRRIGATION SCHEME UPDATE

The Council has taken on responsibility for promoting a water augmentation scheme for the Wairau Plain southern valleys area. Water will be diverted from the Wairau River near the Waihopai River mouth and piped under pressure to the southern

valleys area. The scheme will provide welcome relief for the southern valleys aquifers and will open up previously dry areas for irrigation.

The scheme is currently being constructed with pipes being laid that will carry the water. It is intended that the scheme will be up and running for the 2004/2005 irrigation season.

As part of the water review that is currently underway, the Council will consider the implications for use of the water that may become available from sources within the Southern Valleys area once the augmentation scheme is running. As indicated earlier in this Update, the review process will be considering the allocation framework for water in the Wairau/Atawere Plan area, given the unprecedented demand for water experienced in the last few years.



*Laying of pipes for the water scheme*



*Blenheim Treatment ponds*

## **DISCHARGES FROM COMMUNITY SEWERAGE SYSTEMS**

The Council maintains and operates community sewerage systems at Blenheim, Picton, Seddon, Spring Creek and Havelock. The Blenheim and Seddon sewerage systems are oxidation and maturation ponds; the Picton plant is an extended aeration plant, while the Havelock and Spring Creek systems are single oxidation ponds. The outfalls from the Blenheim, Picton and Havelock systems discharge into the coastal area while the remaining two systems discharge into freshwater.

Each system operates under a resource consent issued under the Resource Management Act 1991, with conditions

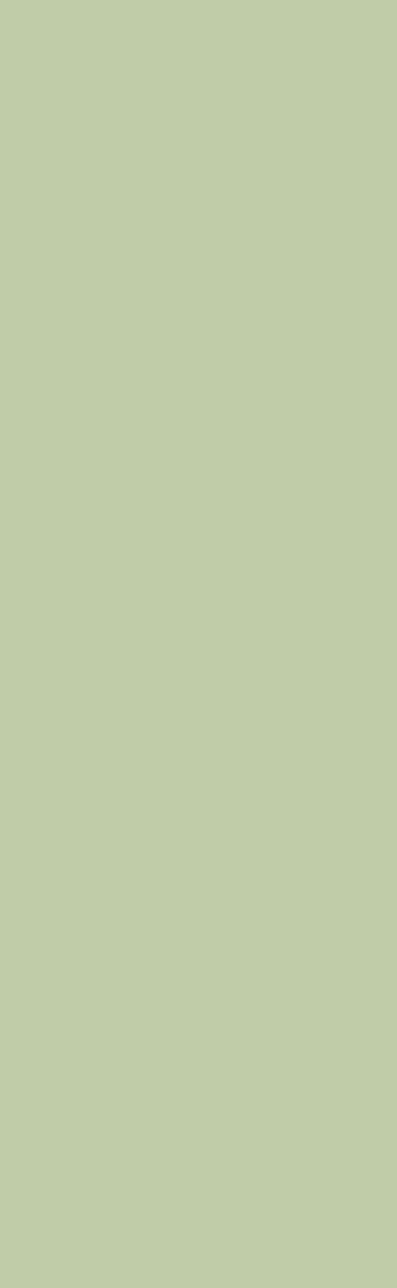
that require monitoring and regular reporting. At all plants the Council monitors the quality of the incoming effluent from the community, the treated effluent and the receiving water in close proximity to the discharge outlet. This allows for any effect on water quality from the discharge to be established relatively quickly. The Council also undertakes ecological surveys around each of the discharge outlets, to determine the effect of the effluent on the surrounding environment.

Copies of the latest monitoring reports on these discharges are available on request from the Council.

## **TRUSTPOWER HYDROELECTRIC POWER SCHEME**

TrustPower has recently completed a feasibility study of a hydroelectric power scheme for the Wairau River. The proposal is an extension to the existing Branch hydropower scheme that is already operated by the Company in the Wairau Valley. The feasibility study findings have been presented to key stakeholders, interest groups and the Wairau Valley community. TrustPower

is currently finalising a resource consent application, with the intent to lodge this once sufficient support is gained from Wairau Valley landowners, with respect to easements to build and operate the proposed hydropower scheme. Several interest groups have begun voicing their opposition to the scheme, with the recent launch of the “Save the Wairau” campaign.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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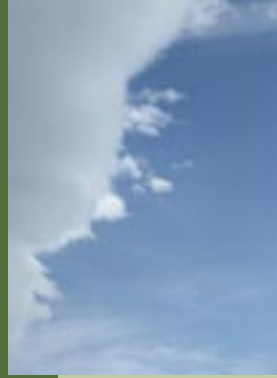
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