



State of the Environment Report

**UPDATE
2003-2004**



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*Cover photo: Ray Halliday out
walking on the Wither Hills*

FOREWORD

In Marlborough we enjoy a quality of life that is second to none. Our sunshine, land, water resources and coastal areas provide for a diverse range of living, working and recreational opportunities that others can only envy. Our future is bright but we do have to look after our environment.

Welcome to our latest State of Environment Report Update. I know this report will help us all take stock of our natural resources, and encourage actions to look after and improve them. Successfully managing Marlborough's natural and physical resources presents a continuing and increasingly complex challenge.

As always, this year's report is wide ranging, covering all natural resources: air, water, land, and the coast, along with a number of related matters including managing the Wairau Plain, Blenheim's growth, Picton flooding and pest fish and weeds, to name but a few.

It is particularly pleasing to record some of the many ways in which the community is actively addressing environmental concerns. The work by Rai Valley farmers in bridging dairy herd stream crossings, the voluntary conservation of significant natural areas by land owners, the efforts of the Grovetown community, Rangitane, Ngati Rarua and Ngati Toa, and others, in restoring and improving the Grovetown Lagoon are just a few examples of the excellent way in which Marlborough people are making a difference.

So read on. I know you will find this report interesting, and I hope you will be inspired to do what you can to keep Marlborough the way we want it – and perhaps make it even better!



Alistair Sowman
Mayor, Marlborough District Council



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*Rangitoto Islands,
Marlborough Sounds*

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the State of the Environment Report Update for 2003/2004. This year's Update report has a very different look to the reports of the last four years. While the chapter headings are the same, we have taken a fresh approach to the formatting to make the information interesting and easy to read.

As indicated in the last Update report, we have also been reconsidering how we are going to report in future years on Marlborough's environment. Over the past 10 years, the Council has produced an annual report, a commitment that stems from the Marlborough Regional Policy Statement (MRPS). The MRPS states that the Council would report annually to the Marlborough community and that the report would:

- identify environmental trends of importance;
- recommend changes in activities in order that expectations for environmental quality are met; and
- be a signpost to more detailed reporting where appropriate.

However, it does take a lot of effort to produce such a report every year. So from 2005 we will be looking at other means to get the same information out to the community.

The Council is not intending to lessen its commitment to either monitoring or reporting. In fact the opposite will be the case. But there are probably more effective ways of communicating with the community than through a report published once a year. The Council will therefore be using newsletters, newspaper articles and its website, to let the community know more about its monitoring work, investigations and responses to issues that arise.

Reporting is important, as it can tell us about how good, bad or otherwise our environment is. Sometimes it can be quite hard to tell whether things are good or bad. For a new issue that arises, there is often little or no scientific information on how things were before, to be able to make a comparison about how bad the effects of the issue really are. Deciding on how good or bad things are can also depend on how long we have been monitoring for. Trends in water quality, for example, may not become evident for well over 10-15 years. While differences from year to year, can be observed in such monitoring, it may take a lot longer to determine what the actual trends are.

From whatever part of the community we belong to, live or work in, or represent, we can all directly or indirectly influence the overall well-being of our environment. Reporting on the state of the environment can help influence peoples' actions about their own use of the natural and physical resources of Marlborough. (The environment includes people and communities as well as what we usually think of as 'natural' ecosystems.) By reporting information on issues, and on ways in which the adverse effects of the use of these resources can be reduced, the Council is helping to achieve the sustainable management purpose of the Resource Management Act 1991.

Each of the chapters that follow describes some of the monitoring activities of the Council. This includes the results of resource consent monitoring, general state of the environment monitoring to determine long term trends and in response to how well, or otherwise, the resource management plans are helping to achieve the sustainable management of the natural and physical resources of the district.

Related technical reports are listed in the reference section at the end of each chapter. These reports, which provide more detail on the monitoring activities and investigations that are reported on here, are available from the Council's offices.