

REGIONAL COUNCIL NEWS

September 2011

Development of an avoidance zone around the Alpine Fault

Over the past two years Council has been working steadily behind the scenes to reduce the effects of a future Alpine Fault earthquake event and minimise injury, loss of life and property losses. In 2009 Geological & Nuclear Sciences were engaged by Council to establish a Fault Avoidance Zone for the Alpine Fault. The project was completed in March 2010 and the outcomes have since been reported to the District Councils for building control and planning use.

A Fault Avoidance Zone identifies the area where an active fault line will rupture to the surface when a major earthquake occurs. Thus the project is about minimising risk to life and property from rupture effects, and not about the effects of the region wide major shaking which will occur with an Alpine Fault earthquake.

Scientists are confident that the next Alpine Fault earthquake will rupture to surface level along much of the line of the fault. The surface rupture will be quite marked, with an up-throw of 1-2m on the Southern Alps (Pacific Plate) side and a sideways slip of 6-9m north-eastward, on the coastal strip (Australian Plate) side. Any buildings or other structures located astride the rupture zone could be badly damaged and people may be injured or killed.

For much of its 450km length along the range front of the Southern Alps, the Alpine Fault runs through undeveloped bush country, across farmland occasionally and sometimes through small communities. Only one community is of major concern, the tourist town of Franz Josef, where the fault line runs obliquely through the town area and across the main street heading toward the Waiho River along the range front.

A number of dwellings or businesses are within the width of the Fault Avoidance Zone at Franz Josef. A further study, with the aid of LiDAR imagery, is being undertaken to map the projected fault rupture line here in more detail. This information will then be used by Westland District Council and property owners to decide on steps they might take to safeguard both life and property.

For future development near the Alpine Fault, District Councils can use the Fault Avoidance Zone, together with Ministry for the Environment guidelines for development on or close to active faults, to process new subdivision and building consent applications so that future buildings or structures are of the appropriate type and not subject to rupture damage, thereby reducing risks. Please contact Mary Traves, our Natural Hazards Analyst if you would like more details about this project.

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Fencing off waterways is one aim of Farm Plans

Water quality improves markedly

In 2006 farm plans were undertaken in both the Harris Creek and Orowaiti River catchments by the New Zealand Landcare Trust with support from Westland Milk Products and the West Coast Regional Council. The farm plans aimed to identify farming practices that could be improved and work this into a three year plan for the farm owner.

High participation was noted in both catchments and the attitude of most landowners was very positive to the voluntary plans.

Work set out in the plans varied from the installation of various structures (bridges, culverts, fencing, concrete work) to nutrient and riparian management.

Follow up work has recently been finished to assess the effectiveness of the plans.

Council is very pleased to see that the majority of works that were promised in the plans has been undertaken and we are now seeing positive improvements in water quality in both catchments.

The farmers in both catchments felt that it was a positive process which allowed them to plan better and identify priority tasks that needed action.

Council is looking at more follow up work in these catchments and will look into other catchments to adopt this approach which has been positive for all parties involved. Council would like to thank all participants in the farm plan process, especially the farmers involved, Jan Derks, NZ Landcare Trust and Westland Milk Products.

Dairy Compliance News

There are currently 386 dairy sheds through out the West Coast Region located between Fox Glacier and Karamea. Compliance staff will be inspecting every dairy shed during the 2011/12 milking season.

The main focus of our inspections is farm effluent systems to ensure no pollution of waterways is occurring. Dairy sheds that receive a non-compliant rating will be revisited to ensure remedial work has been undertaken.

During July, compliance staff undertook their annual dairy flight where checks were done on the majority of farms to check compliance with the wintering/stand-off pad rule and management of crop paddocks. As a result of the flight, follow up enquiries and inspections were carried out.



Luke McNeish, new Dairy Compliance Officer for the southern part of the West Coast

A wintering/stand-off pad is an area to which stock are confined during wet weather to prevent pasture damage. Such areas normally generate mud and effluent which can then contaminate nearby waterways.

The rule requires that wintering/stand-off pads be located a minimum of 50 metres from any waterways, and that the waterways do not become contaminated.

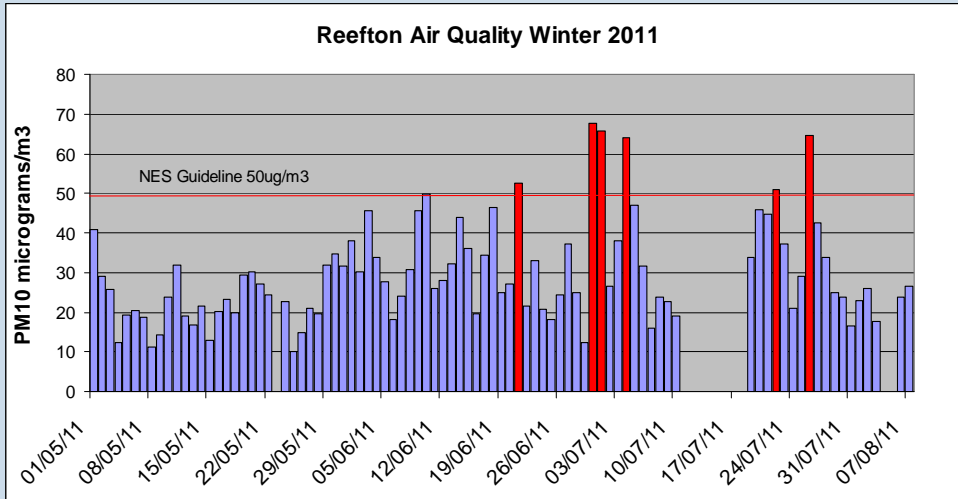
Crop paddocks located by waterways must be fenced off to prevent stock causing damage and soil erosion along riparian margins or contamination of waterways.

Council works closely with farmers and other agencies involved in the dairy industry to achieve a higher level of compliance with regional rules and resource consent conditions to mitigate adverse effects on the environment.

Reefton Air Quality report for Winter

West Coast Regional Council Resource Science staff monitor air quality at Reefton to measure compliance with the National Environmental Standard. Currently this requires that the average daily concentration of PM₁₀ does not exceed 50 micrograms/m³ more than three times per year by 1 September 2016. PM₁₀ is a measure of smoke particles in the air with a diameter of less than 10 micrometers.

This winter, so far, there have been 6 days in Reefton where PM₁₀ has exceeded the National Environmental Standard. The highest 24 hour average of PM₁₀ during the period of May to August was 67.7 micrograms/m³. For further information regarding the monitoring of air quality at Reefton, contact Emma Chaney, Resource Science Technician.



New Sites for Flood Warning Programme

Two additional sites have been added to the West Coast flood warning programme. The new sites will improve our ability to forecast floods and provide flood information to communities. They include:

- a new rain gauge in the middle of Karamea River catchment on the Garibaldi Range
- a new water level recorder and rain gauge at the Hokitika Gorge

Several of the regions' mountain rain gauge sites have also been modernised with new equipment being installed to replace that of 20–30 years ago.

The remaining existing rain gauge sites will be upgraded within the year. These changes, once completed, will improve the flood warning capabilities within the region.



Casey Beal, Resource Science technician, after cleaning and re-calibrating the new rain gauge at Hokitika Gorge

New Flood Report available

Thanks to all those who responded to our request for information regarding impacts on their communities following the 27/28 December 2010 heavy rain event. The feedback from you, both photographs and anecdotes, was much appreciated.

Council has learnt from this event and from the comments received from the community. It has begun work in some affected catchments and will implement the changes to the website which were suggested.

The information collected, together with hydrological data and weather maps, was compiled into a report entitled **Report on West Coast Weather Event 27 & 28 December 2010**. The report is available on the home page of our website at www.wcrc.govt.nz. Copies have also been sent out to all the District and Community Libraries around our region.

Mining Consents Update: Escarpment Mine

The West Coast Regional Council and Buller District Council joint hearing for Buller Coal Limited's consent applications for its proposed Escarpment Mine on the Denniston Plateau, and associated coal handling facility at Fairdown, commenced on 7 June 2011.

The hearing took place at the Buller Bridge Club rooms in Westport over a total of 12 days and was formally closed on 5 August 2011. Terry Archer (Regional Councillor), Sharon McGarry and Warwick Heal formed the Hearing Committee. A total of 26 witnesses presented evidence on the proposal on behalf of Buller Coal and 14 individuals and groups spoke to their submissions on the proposal. The Committee's decision on the consent applications is imminent.

Pike River Royal Commission

The Royal Commission into the 2010 Pike River Coal Mine Tragedy is conducting its inquiry in four phases.

- Phase 1. Regulatory Context
- Phase 2. Search and Rescue
- Phase 3. Cause of the Explosion
- Phase 4. Policy Aspects.

The West Coast Regional Council, and Grey and Buller District Councils were all asked by the Royal Commission to provide information and evidence on their regulatory roles in relation to the mine for Phase 1 of the inquiry. The Councils worked together to avoid duplicating information and evidence provided to the Royal Commission, and to reduce the resource demands and costs associated with providing such information.

A total of sixty-one participants registered an interest in Phase 1 with approximately fifty witness statements being filed from various individuals. After considering the information, the Commission called twelve people to give oral evidence including Council's Consents & Compliance Manager, Colin Dall. The Council may be asked to provide further evidence for Phases 3 and 4 of the inquiry.

Paying your rates?

Council now operates a **direct debit** system for payment of its rates accounts.

This means:

- No more forgetting to pay your rates before the due date.
- No more penalties to pay on late payments.
- No need to post date cheques.
- Payments can be made to suit your budget.

We can offer a number of different payment options, e.g. weekly, fortnightly, monthly or per instalment.

If you would like to use **Ratepay** as a method of payment or would like more information please contact Paula Wright, our Rates Officer, by phoning **0508 800 118** or call into our office and pick up a form.

Other payment options include:

- Posting in our prepaid envelope enclosed with your rates account.
- Over the counter at any Westpac branch on the West Coast.
- Paying via internet or telephone banking. (Our details are lodged with all major banks.) Our bank account number is **03-0846-0121500-00**
- Credit Card payments can be made via Council's website **www.wcrc.govt.nz**

Honda TreeFund News

Four West Coast communities will benefit over the next year from grants by the Honda TreeFund. Funds are generated from Honda car sales and administered through Regional Councils around New Zealand. Applicants are asked to state how their plans will benefit some aspect of the local environment (from a given list) and are awarded grants based on how many trees/plants they need for their projects with \$5 being allowed per tree.

2011 grants were made to the:

- Prestons Bus Community Reserve Project, Hokitika (*Westland District Council*)
- Hokitika Beach Blue Penguin Habitat Restoration Project (*Hokitika Scouts & West Coast Blue Penguin Trust*)
- Greymouth Golf Links Native Habitat Restoration Project (*Greymouth Golf Club*)
- Ted McGrath Memorial Walkway Upgrade, Camerons Beach (*Camerons Community Club*)

Pest Plant Fact Sheets

A full array of new Pest Plant Fact Sheets are now available on Council's website at **www.wcrc.govt.nz** see under Environmental Management / Pest Plants or contact the Environmental Information Officer for paper copies (contact details at bottom of page).

The Fact Sheets are organised in sections as per their status under the Regional Pest Plant Management Strategy 2010 (also available on the website). Each fact sheet has photographs to assist in identifying plants plus information about best practice control methods. Fact sheets available include:

- Boundary Control Plants: *Gorse, Broom, Giant Buttercup, Yellow Ragwort*
- Total Control Plants: *African Feather Grass, Bushy Asparagus, Cathedral Bells, Cape Ivy, Coltsfoot, Dense Oxygen Weed, Nodding Thistle, Parrots Feather, Tree Privet, Smilax, Spartina, White Edged Nightshade, Woolly Nightshade*
- Progressive Control Plants: *Asiatic & Giant Knotweeds, Banana Passionfruit, Chilean Rhubarb, Chocolate Vine, Darwins Barberry, Elaeagnus, German Ivy, Himalayan Honeysuckle, Japanese Honeysuckle, Old Mans Beard, Purple Pampas, Rhododendron Ponticum, Spanish Heath, Tradescantia, Wild Ginger, Yellow Flag Iris*
- Surveillance Plants: *Asiatic & Giant Knotweeds, Lagarosiphon, Reed Sweet Grass*

Please help keep our region free of plants which have the potential to reduce land productivity or impact on our natural areas.



Exercise Pacific Wave - November 10th 2011

There have been over 2,000 tsunamis observed over the past 4,000 years, of which 1,100 have been confirmed by scientific research.

In terms of casualties over the last 200 years this averages out to about one fatal tsunami per year. The images captured of the fatal tsunami in Japan earlier this year illustrate the power and ferocity of such events.

On November 10th, the West Coast Civil Defence Emergency Group, made up of the four Councils, and supported by our partner agencies, will be participating in Exercise Pacific Wave.

This is an international exercise with countries right around the Pacific Rim getting involved.

New Zealand has elected to use a regional source scenario with a tsunami originating in Vanuatu. While this will affect both west and east coasts to varying degrees, the larger impacts will be on the west coast of the country.

The exercise provides opportunities for us to further develop national and local chains of command and decision making, and develop tsunami response plans for our coastal communities.

Make your home safer

We live in a tectonically active region. Good tips for making your home safer in the event of an earthquake are:

- ensure your hot water cylinder is secure by tying it back to your house framing
- ensure the header tank in your roof space is also well secured to prevent it coming loose and possibly falling through the ceiling

Top marks if you've already done these! Loss of the contents of your hot water cylinder and/or header tank would mean loss of valuable drinking water in the event of an earthquake.

For more information about how to secure hot water cylinders, and/or header tanks, visit **www.getthru.govt.nz** or talk to your plumber. Do it today!