

## New Resource Science Staff Member

New Regional Council staff member Jack Grinsted lends a hand across many different areas within the Resource Science section of the Council. He assists running the flood warning system, and collecting quality environmental data. This requires a balance of deskwork and fieldwork, which can see him visiting many different sites up and down the coast.

Maintenance of the flood warning river level monitoring sites is one major responsibility. This consists of regular maintenance visits and other unscheduled visits when breakdowns occur. In the past month Jack has also been assisting Resource Science with the installation of a new flood warning site at Cobden. This has required the installation of a new staff gauge, rain gauge and logger box.

Other ongoing tasks include organization and completion of fieldwork for the State of the Environment surface water quality monitoring programme. This involves calibrating monitoring equipment, maintaining the water quality lab and making sure data is collected within tight protocols. This work demands significant amounts of care and patience to ensure the high level of accuracy required. The fieldwork itself must be done during low stream flows, which usually and conveniently coincide with spells of fine weather, but not always!



Jack Grinsted preparing to take water readings at Saltwater Creek, Paroa. The recording device links back to a computer on the creek bank nearby.

## Beneficiaries of Honda TreeFund 2007

Once again a variety of tree planting projects Coast-wide have obtained financial support from the Honda TreeFund. In each region of New Zealand car sales at the various Honda Agencies generate a fund which is awarded to each region annually for various projects requiring tree plantings. Administration of the fund is carried out for Honda NZ by Regional Councils around the country.

West Coast communities which benefited from the fund this year were:

- Karamea Estuary Enhancement Group (estuary plantings, Karamea River)
- Granity School (coastal erosion stabilisation)
- Tauranga Bay Working Party (foreshore plantings)
- Westland Railway & Model Club (around former Runanga Railway Station)
- Greymouth High School (at Recreation Ground)
- Watson's Creek Restoration Project
- Kumara Community Sports Group (at Recreation Grounds)
- Hokitika Rotary Club (Hokitika town gateways)
- Fox Glacier School (beautification & windbreak)

The successful applicants all had objectives which met the core criteria for a funding allocation, the principal one being that all plantings be native trees.

Another of the criteria set by Honda NZ is that the groups also invite the local Honda agent, and any of his customers who bought one of the cars which helped generate the fund, along to one of their planting days. This makes Ken Williams of Coastwide Honda in Greymouth a fairly busy person at times as he endeavours to get to the various planting days.

Community groups who wished to apply for an allocation of next year's funding can register their interest now with the West Coast Regional Council's Environmental Information Officer.

## Have you Bridged your Stock Crossings?

In February 2007 the Regional Council developed a new policy to enforce stock crossing discharges in a fair and reasonable manner.

The Council reminds farmers that your most regularly used crossing must be bridged by **31 December 2007**. Where more than one crossing is needed on a farm you have until December 2008 to build the second and subsequent crossings. You may write to the Council Chair to request a further time extension if the December 2007 or 2008 timeframes are unreasonable in your particular circumstances.

Council's Compliance staff are happy to assist you in determining how this policy will affect your farm operation, and to assist in developing solutions to ensure you comply with these requirements. For more information please contact Michael Meehan or Cathy Blincoe.

## Plant Me Instead!

'Plant Me Instead!' is the title of a well illustrated booklet, published by NZ Weedbusters, which has been prepared for top of the South Island residents (West Coast, Nelson & Marlborough). The booklet lists exotic and native plants (with colour photographs), as alternatives to those garden plants now recognised as pest plants or invasive weeds, e.g. Wild Ginger, Yellow Flag Iris, Japanese Honeysuckle. Copies of the booklet will be available from the Regional Council, DOC Area Offices or your local Garden Centre.

## Burning Ban on Plastic Coated Wire

The new National Environmental Standards for Air Quality prohibit the burning in the open of the following substances:

- Plastic or other coated wire
- Tyres
- Oil
- Bitumen (for road maintenance)

All such items should go to landfill, not be burnt. The main District Council Landfills at Westport, McLeans Pit (Greymouth) and Hokitika will take small amounts of waste oil for recycling. Large quantities of waste oil can also be recycled through Environmental Recovery Services (ERS), Christchurch, 0800 8733 645. Much of the waste oil collected is recycled through the Holcim's Cement Plant at Cape Foulwind.



# REGIONAL REPORT

NEWSLETTER September 2007



THE WESTCOAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

## Comments From the Chief Executive

The local body elections are now almost upon us and I strongly encourage every ratepayer to complete and return their voting papers once you receive them in the mail. The elected Councillor's policy setting and decision making role is very important for our region.

Councillor John Clayton has been Regional Council Chair for the past nine years. With John's imminent departure from the Council table I have been reflecting on how far the Council has progressed since the mid 1990s, when John was first elected to the Regional Council.

In the mid 1990s, Council experienced serious financial difficulties, which required government assistance to resolve. In 2007 we are now in a stable situation financially, and we use our modest investment fund to offset the need for major rate rises.

In the mid 1990s we were still struggling with how to interpret and deliver the Resource Management Act on the West Coast. In 2007 we now have a full set of RMA plans and policies in place. The Regional Policy Statement, Regional Coastal Plan, Air Plan and Discharge to Land Plan are operative, while the Water Plan and the Land and Riverbed Plan are largely complete, pending some fine-tuning of wetland provisions.

The Regional Council now has stable resource consents and compliance teams delivering on the policy framework set out in the Plans. We performed better than any other South Island regional authority in this year's Ministry for the Environment survey of resource consent processing efficiency.

Our State of the Environment monitoring team is stronger than ever, with critical environmental information being collected for future use and analysis. This information will guide the reviews of resource management plans and policies over the coming years.

In Civil Defence we are about to embark on a comprehensive 24 hour exercise to practice how we would respond if a serious earthquake ever hit the Coast.

Our Tb possum control work has adapted its depth and structure to meet the needs of the Animal Health Board and we expect to see excellent results in the coming years due to those changes.

From my perspective as CEO, the organisation is in good cheer and is delivering its functions competently. It is with deep regret that we will farewell John in October, after his twelve years as a Regional Councillor, and nine of those as Chair. However, it is clear that John is leaving the Council in a considerably better condition than it was when he arrived.



Retiring Chair, John Clayton

Chris Ingle  
Chief Executive Officer

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## 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 phone our office on:

**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.)

## Reminder: Whitebait Stands

To date approximately 93% of whitebait applications have been lodged with Council and 83% have been granted and issued. If you have not received information about applying for renewal of your whitebait stand consent, please contact Council immediately. You will not be able to fish your stand this season without a new consent.

If you have any queries regarding this please contact Kelly Balloch. If you would like to relocate your stand, please contact Grant Trenwith.

To contact a staff member in relation to an article in this newsletter or to make an enquiry

Telephone 03 768 0466 (Greymouth calling area)  
or 0508 800 118 (Westland & Buller calling areas)  
or Fax 03 768 7133  
or Email: [info@wrc.govt.nz](mailto:info@wrc.govt.nz)



## Reefton Air Quality

In Reefton, the West Coast Regional Council has been measuring the concentration of smoke particulates less than 10 microns in size (PM10) using a Beta Attenuation Monitor (BAM). The National Air Quality Standards require that the average concentration measured during a day should not be above 50 µg/m3 more than once every year.

The standard was exceeded in Reefton on 21 days this winter, and on 16 days in 2006. The highest daily concentration measured was 134 µg/m3 which is considerably higher than the maximum of 85.5 µg/m3 measured last winter.

Over 90% of the PM10 in Reefton originates from the burning of wood and coal for heating. As a response to the exceedences the WCRC will distribute a brochure with information about PM10. The brochure suggests ways to reduce emissions by applying better burning practices and the use of home insulation.

Graphs and other information regarding Reefton air quality monitoring can be viewed at the following link on Council's website: [http://www.wcrc.govt.nz/state\\_of\\_the\\_environment/airquality/current.htm](http://www.wcrc.govt.nz/state_of_the_environment/airquality/current.htm)

## Marsden TB Possum Study

Vector Control Services recently conducted research work in the Marsden area for Landcare Research to find out how Bovine TB is being transmitted between possums. Radio collars were attached to both healthy and infected possums at five different sites in the Cockeye Valley, near Marsden. When the possums, with their collars on, come close to each other, the interaction is recorded and this data can be later downloaded. VCS staff radio tracked the possums periodically and would also recover any possums that had died.

Interim results from the study seem to indicate that grossly infected possums are surviving for longer periods than was first thought, and this means they may be continuing to be a source for the disease.

The field trial work is now over and all of the collars have been recovered, but analysing the information collected has only just begun. The data needs to be downloaded, interpreted and the field notes compared to other information gathered.



VCS staff member Robin Thomas with possum tracking device.

## TrustPower Resource Consent Applications

The hearing for the proposed Arnold Valley hydroelectricity power generation scheme is scheduled to commence in Greymouth on November 5th 2007.

Trustpower is expected to take the first week of the hearing to present its application. This will be a joint hearing with the Grey District Council and the Regional Council having jointly appointed a Hearing Committee comprised of John Clayton (Chairman), Michael Bowden and Brent Cowie.

## Reminder on Possum Control Warning Signs

Council would like to remind the public to take care around possum control warning signs.

Whenever possum control is undertaken using toxins, warning signs are erected at all access points to the operational area to advise the public of the risks. Many of the signs are put up by contractors to the Council.

"Each toxin carries different risks," says the Council's Vector Programme Manager, Andrew Macalister. "Cyanide is a particular risk for children, whereas 1080 is a particular risk for dog-owners, as dogs are very susceptible to possum carcasses for at least four months after an operation. Brodifacoum and cholecalciferol also carry risks."

"Sometimes people can start to relax a month or so after an operation when, in fact, there may still be a high risk in the area." He says each sign will identify the appropriate risks and caution period, and these should be paid attention to.

Signs are also sometimes removed or vandalised. "This is illegal, and subject to penalties under the Hazardous Substances and New Organisms Act," says Mr Macalister. "But, more importantly than that, it puts other people at risk. We would ask the public to report any theft or vandalism of warning signs to the Council immediately."

Contractors put up signs where they have laid poison then take them down when the operation has been completed. The time they are up depends on the type of poison and the way it is laid (ground or aerial).

## Cobden Lagoon Project

The Council has installed a new flood warning site at the Cobden Lagoon. The site has a water level sensor and rain gauge. The information from the site is sent back to the Council via cellular communication. The site uses a new logging and communication system, which is the first of its kind to be used in the Regional Council's flood warning system.

During intense local rain events, and Grey River flood events, the Cobden Lagoon often fills rapidly which can cause flooding in the Range Creek area. The Council maintains a 'cut' to the sea allowing water to drain out of the lagoon during floods, when the floodgates are closed due to high river levels.

As the lagoon reaches critical levels, alarms will be sent back to Council's flood warning staff. The flood alarms will then allow Council staff to assess the lagoon and instigate excavation of the "cut" to reduce flood pressure on Range Creek.



A view of the newly widened Cobden 'cut' taken from the beach and looking back toward the lagoon. If necessary, the beach can be excavated to allow for floodwaters to drain away.

## Stockton Water Management Update

Over the past year water management practices at Stockton's open cast coal mine have come under increasing scrutiny. Solid Energy has invested significant resources into improving its water management over recent months.

A number of goals have been set in regard to water quality in the Ngakawau River. These goals are centred on encouraging whitebait migration up the lower Ngakawau River and should be achieved by 2010.

In October of 2006 Solid Energy was granted a resource consent to discharge ultra-fine limestone into the Mangatini Stream. The end result of this operation will be an increase in the pH levels in the Ngakawau River which will prove to be beneficial for whitebait migration. Sample results from the lower Ngakawau River already show significant improvements in the pH levels.

Solid Energy is also in the process of installing a water treatment plant in order to treat black (coal laden) and brown (sediment laden) water in the Mangatini Stream catchment. This water treatment plant consists of two large lamella thickeners (these machines help settle out sediment in dirty water). Each lamella is capable of treating 200 litres of water per second. The first lamella is scheduled to be operational in mid August, to be followed shortly after by the second. It is anticipated that there will be an improvement in water clarity in the Mangatini Stream, and subsequently the Ngakawau River, as a result of this water treatment plant.



Solid Energy staff top up the lime dosing plant by the haul road above the Mangatini River. The finely ground lime is added to the river water to neutralise acid water which drains from the opencast mine workings

## Civil Defence & Emergency Management Training



Regional Council staff & a local Fire Service member working together at the Civil Defence training day on May 29th 2007.

Natural disasters and emergencies can happen at any time as recent events in Taranaki and Northland have shown. One of this Council's responsibilities is to provide for the co-ordination and management during major events such as flooding or earthquake that span more than one District.

## Agrichemical Collection a Success

The organised collection from farm sheds of old and unwanted pesticides, sprays and timber treatment applications (collectively known as agrichemicals), has been proceeding steadily around New Zealand over the last 10 years.

Nearly 7 tonnes (6851 kilograms) of old agrichemicals were picked up from West Coast properties over recent weeks. The pickups were organized by the West Coast Waste Working Group (a joint initiative of all four West Coast Councils) and paid for by the Ministry for the Environment.

The Regional Council provided the administration for the work and Grey District Council provided a place at McLeans Pit landfill where the collected agrichemicals could be stored until they were safely packed for transport off the West Coast.

This year's round of agrichemical pickups was the third one organised for the West Coast. The first exercise in 2000 involved 3 pickup points and netted about 1.4 tonnes. Much of this was waste oil, which is recyclable rather than being hazardous. Only a small proportion was agrichemicals.

The second attempt in 2004 involved 18 pickup points between Karamea and Franz Josef and this time about 1.2 tonnes was collected. Once again the quantity of agrichemicals was low.

This year, instead of advertising set pickup sites, rural property owners were targeted directly via farm service providers, the Westland Milk Products monthly newsletters and radio advertising asking them to register with the Regional Council by a set date. Those that registered were then visited individually by contractor John Larcombe.



John Larcombe unloading DDT fertilizer at the container store at McLeans Pit landfill, August 2007.

The Regional Council, along with the three district councils, have this year participated in two training sessions for all staff to become better prepared to respond to emergencies and assist with the response and recovery of affected communities.

The Councils will also be involved in Exercise Pandora in September this year. The 24 hour exercise, based on a major Alpine Fault Earthquake, will see all South Island Civil Defence Emergency Management Groups activate their emergency operation centres. On the West Coast, emergency services, lifeline utilities, health, and welfare agencies will also participate to support the four Councils. This will be an opportunity to test current Civil Defence plans and processes for emergency response and identify areas for future improvement.

The community is encouraged to do their bit as well. The "Get Ready Get Thru" campaign on television, and recent Coast-wide mail-outs of the household checklist, assist with getting prepared. The West Coast can expect to be isolated for some days following a major Alpine Fault Earthquake, therefore you need to ensure that you have at least three days supply of food and water along with other basic supplies.

For more information on how to put together your Emergency Kit check out: [www.getthru.co.nz](http://www.getthru.co.nz)