

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.)

Bathing Beach Report

The Council monitors water quality annually at a range of popular water recreation sites, during the warmer months of the year. Numbers of E. coli and Enterococci bacteria are used as indicators of pathogen risk for swimming at a site.

All sites tested in November and December were within the low risk category, as were most in January, including:

Buller River @ Marrs Beach
Buller River @ Shingle Beach
Rapahoe Beach @ End of Statham St
7 Mile Creek @ SH6 Rapahoe
Nelson Creek @ Swimming Hole Reserve
Grey River @ Taylorville Swimming Hole
Cobden Beach @ Bright St W end
Blaketown Beach @ South Tiphead
Blaketown Lagoon @ Slipway Beach
Arnold River @ Blairs Rd Bridge
Arnold River @ Kotuku Fishing Access
Lake Brunner @ Cashmere Bay Boat Ramp
Lake Brunner @ Iveagh Bay
Lake Brunner @ Moana
Hokitika Beach @ Hokitika
Crooked River @ Te Kinga
Kaniere River @ Kaniere Kokatahi Rd
Lake Kaniere @ Hans Bay Boat Ramp
Lake Kaniere @ Hans Bay Jetty
Lake Kaniere @ Sunny Bight

In January, the Orowaiti Lagoon @ Picnic Area; Seven Mile Creek @ SH6 Rapahoe; and Blaketown Lagoon @ Slipway Beach, had bacterial levels indicative of an increased health risk, but were still within an acceptable range.

As a general rule, particularly in areas downstream of farmland or urban areas, swimming will pose a greater health risk during or shortly after substantial rain. Avoid swimming in these areas for at least two days after heavy rainfall.

Trustpower Consent Application Update

The TrustPower consent applications for the Arnold Valley Hydroelectricity Power Scheme are currently still being heard. TrustPower presented its evidence in November and sixteen individuals/groups spoke on their submissions on the proposal (either in support or opposition) in the last week of November.

The hearing is still to hear one remaining submitter and TrustPower will provide additional information as requested by the Hearing Commissioners. The Commissioners will release their decision after the hearing concludes.

This has been a joint hearing of applications submitted to the West Coast Regional Council and the Grey District Council. The Hearing Commissioners were John Clayton (Chairman), Dr Brent Cowie and Michael Bowden.

New Vector Manager for the West Coast

Recent staff changes within Vector Control at Council have seen the appointment of a new Vector Manager and new vector-monitoring officer.

Aerial and ground control vector operations planned for 2007-2008 are progressing according to schedule. These operations have been audited by vector management staff and monitored by monitoring contractors. Results show that the control programme is starting to have an effect on TB, but there is a lot of work to do and many challenges to be met.

Planning for the 2008 - 09 operational year is also well under way with a number of farming areas adjacent to forested country being scheduled for possum control and monitoring.

The control of TB on the West Coast is paramount to the continued wellbeing of agricultural productivity and the local economy. The new manager and his team will be focussed on achieving these outcomes.



Chris Pullen, Council's new Vector Manager

Vector Control Services: delivering strategic and integrated pest control

Vector Control Services (VCS) is the West Coast Regional Council's business unit. This unit was set up to deliver Bovine TB control/eradication contracts on behalf of the Animal Health Board.

With the new unit manager Randall Beal, the Aerial Programme Manager David Priest and the eight existing staff, VCS has the combined management experience of over sixty years in delivering pest animal control programmes.

In the past year, VCS successfully carried out numerous possum control operations for the Animal Health Board, as well as continuing to develop their skill base.

"The unit has successfully completed a number of different programmes in the past year" said Mr Beal, VCS Manager, "but the core business is to deliver pest control that benefits not only the landowner but the West Coast as a region. Our main focus for the coming years is to help AHB achieve its target of Bovine TB freedom".

Other work has included didymo surveys, pest plant control, predator (stoat) control, and wasp control.

"VCS staff are well respected amongst the local farming community because we consistently deliver work that meets not only contract specifications but also meets landowners needs" said Mr Beal. "Due to the fact that VCS and our sub-contractors are locally based, we understand and have the experience to deal with West Coast conditions."



Randall Beal, new VCS Unit manager



REGIONAL REPORT

NEWSLETTER March 2008



THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

Message from the Chair...



Chairman
Ross Scarlett



Deputy Chairman
Peter Ewen

Our new team of Regional Councillors has settled in following the elections held last October.

Deputy Chairman Peter Ewen and I are pleased to reflect on the very good performance in resource consent processing timeframes. Last year we were the most efficient South Island Regional Council in terms of consent processing and this efficiency continues. Those involved in new West Coast developments appreciate it when our processes are quick and we deliver within predictable timeframes.

Our recent Civil Defence readiness exercise was also a notable success - all Council staff were fully trained during a realistic 24 hour exercise. Staff are now aware of exactly what to expect should a major earthquake hit our region.

Regional rates are still being held - Despite 22% inflation since 1999, our regional rates have only risen 2% for that period. However, our costs are continuing to increase, with additional requirements being imposed by Government. For example this year we assume responsibility under the Building Act for dam construction processes. Discussions with the Government this year will seek to provide better environmental services for the West Coast without large rate rises.

There are also changes about to unfold for how possum control is managed, nationwide, with the Animal Health Board (AHB) now choosing to assume the management role that our Council has traditionally undertaken. Council has the challenge now of gradually transitioning out of vector management, which has been a significant part of our Council's business. Existing staff will be seconded to the AHB, to ensure that local knowledge and skills are not lost. Our Vector Control Services Business Unit is not affected by these changes and will continue to compete for possum contract work.

We have some significant challenges to address in the coming months and our focus will remain firmly on the long-term sustainability of our regional environment, community and economy.

Ross Scarlett
Chairman

Inside this month

- Civil Defence
- Arahura Bridge
- Sediment Control
- Waste Minimisation
- Environmental Funding
- Coastal Property Advice
- and more....



Do you have fuel stocks?

Fuel has been identified as the most important resource following a major event to assist with response and recovery operations. Consequently the West Coast Civil Defence Emergency Management Group has commissioned Fuel Storage Research to determine what types of fuel and volumes are available on the West Coast, where storage facilities are, and how it is transported to the West Coast.

If you have fuel supplies (diesel, petrol, av-gas etc) in quantities greater than 500 litres and have not yet been contacted as part of the research, please let us know. You can call Nichola Costley on **03 768 0466 x 248** or toll free on **0508 800 118**, or email nc@wrc.govt.nz. All information gathered will remain confidential and is only being collated to be used in the event of major emergency.

Recent Staff Appointments:

- Randal Beal (formerly in the Vector Management team) has been appointed as the Vector Control Services Business Unit Manager.
- David Priest has also moved from the Vector Management team to VCS, and aerial possum control work will now be run by the VCS Business Unit from their Jacks Road depot.
- Chris Pullen (formerly Team Leader Compliance) has been appointed as the new Vector Programme Manager.
- Michael Meehan (formerly a senior compliance officer) has been appointed as the new Team Leader Compliance.
- Regan Martin has been appointed as a new Consents Officer



Michael Meehan, new Compliance Team Leader

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

Arahura Road-Rail Bridge

The Council granted the resource consent applications lodged by Ontrack for the replacement of the road and rail bridge across the Arahura on 17 January 2008. The applications were processed under the limited-notification provisions of the Resource Management Act 1991 after the Council was satisfied that their environmental effects were no more than minor. Five submissions on the applications were received from the 19 parties that were considered to be potentially adversely affected by the proposal. Three of the submissions were in support of, one in opposition and one was 'neutral'. As a result of Ontrack's further consultation and discussions, all submitters withdrew their submissions and/or their wish to be heard in relation to their submissions. This meant that a hearing was not required to determine the applications.

Some key aspects of the proposal are:

- The existing single lane road/rail bridge will be replaced with a new combined rail and road bridge consisting of a separate rail line, two lane road and pedestrian/cycleway thoroughfares.
- The flood-flow carrying capacity of the new bridge will be greater than that of the existing bridge.
- After construction of the new bridge has been completed, Ontrack will remove the existing bridge structure from the river. The existing bridge is registered as a Category I historic place/structure, which means that the bridge has special or outstanding historic or cultural heritage value. Ontrack will be undertaking various measures to mitigate its removal, including construction of a landscaped "Heritage Park" incorporating components of the existing bridge and display panels explaining both the historic and cultural values of the old bridge and site.



Sights like this will soon be a thing of the past

Didymo on the West Coast

Didymo cells have been found in samples taken near the mouth of the Arahura River by the Department of Conservation.

Didymo has previously been confirmed in the Buller, Haast and Kakapotahi Rivers, bringing the number of rivers infected on the West Coast to four. The all important message to people who enter waterways is 'Check, Clean, and Dry' your gear. If people do so, it will help to stop further spread.

The Arahura is a popular recreational river, as well as having significant cultural importance. If you are kayaking, fishing or carrying out other activities in rivers and creeks, make sure you 'Check, Clean and Dry' your gear between waterways.

Information on didymo and approved cleaning methods can be found on the MAF Biosecurity New Zealand website: <http://www.biosecurity.govt.nz>

Sediment Control Workshop

After a particularly slow start and little interest in the event, a late run in registrations swelled numbers to just over sixty for the jointly hosted Minerals West Coast, West Coast Regional Council sediment control workshop held at the Grey District Council offices.

Heavy rainfall events and variable soil and sediment types on the West Coast mean that there is no single method or practice that applies to all sediment control. It is with this in mind that contractors, farmers, developers, miners and regulators got together to share ideas about sediment control issues and best practices employed in the region.

Presentations from the Regional Council set the overall regulatory environment and why sediment control is important. Mark Allan from 'Eliot Sinclair' provided an overview of issues and controls encountered and found successful on large developments. Michael Kingsbury and Ashley Shadbolt from Solid Energy shared the results of extensive work undertaken at Stockton on both plant types and mulching products, and mixes to control erosion and sediment generation.

The practices and results stimulated good discussion and ideas that could be applied across a range of situations. The morning's discussion concluded with a suggestion that a West Coast Sediment Control guidebook would be the best way to capture and spread the word about successful practices.

The day concluded with a field trip to the Kaiata Park development to view the problems encountered there and methods being employed to manage discharges generated by the extensive earthworks over a period of months. Over the coming months workshop participants will be putting the proposed sediment control guidebook together.



Kaiata Developments site manager, Jason Pitt, shows participants of the sediment control workshop some of the measures being taken to control sediment run off at the Kaiata Park subdivision project.

Environmental Funding Sources

There are a number of organisations who regularly make sums of money available for environmental projects. Application terms vary from one fund to another but there should be a fund available to suit your particular project. Information about funding from the following sources is held at the West Coast Regional Council or carry out your own search on the Internet. There may be other sources as well so make sure you ask around before starting out on any venture where you need financial assistance.

Sustainable Farming Fund www.maf.govt.nz

Sustainable Management Fund www.smf.govt.nz

Contaminated Sites Remediation Fund www.mfe.govt.nz

Environment Centre Fund www.mfe.govt.nz

Aquaculture Planning Fund www.mfe.govt.nz

Environmental Legal Assistance Fund www.mfe.govt.nz

Biodiversity Condition Fund www.biodiversity.govt.nz

Biodiversity Advice Fund www.biodiversity.govt.nz

Nga Whenua Rahui Fund www.biodiversity.govt.nz

Nature Heritage Fund www.doc.govt.nz

Project Crimson Trust www.doc.govt.nz

Queen Elizabeth II National Trust www.qe2.org.nz

Transpower Community Care Fund www.transpower.co.nz

Transpower – Landcare Trust Fund Trust:
www.landcare.org.nz

BOC Gases 'Where's There's Water' Fund:
www.nzwwa.org.nz

Honda TreeFund www.honda.co.nz



Members of the Kumara Community Sports Group carry out planting at the Kumara Domain, December 1st 2007. Plants were purchased with money awarded to the group from the Honda Tree Fund.

Regional Affairs Committee

The West Coast Regional Council recently hosted the Regional Affairs Committee of Local Government New Zealand on a two day meeting and tour of our region. The Regional Affairs Committee is made up of all the regional council chairs from across New Zealand.

After a meeting and dinner on the 28th February, around 35 regional councillors and CEOs were taken on a tour of the Globe Hill Goldmine near Reefton, followed by a visit to Moana and a talk on the various developments occurring in this part of our region.

These annual tours promote sharing of knowledge on local environmental issues, and facilitate better solutions for managing environmental effects across New Zealand.

Managing your Coastal Property

Many West Coast beaches may have built up over 2008 summer. But that could change when the winter storm period arrives again. When storms from the westerly quarter coincide with a high tide, high waves can seriously erode our beaches, putting private property at risk. We saw this two years ago in Granity. It can, and will, happen again. The West Coast has a gradually eroding coast line, and most low-lying coastal areas are at risk.

From information compiled by NIWA about coastal management, we have found that one of the best ways of reducing the risk to your coastal property is to maintain a well-vegetated buffer zone between your home and the beach. Thick vegetation helps hold the land together and stops gravel being thrown in from the beach during storm events.

Some landowners like a sea view, and some are tempted to clear the vegetation next to the beach. This is not a wise idea in the longer term, as that vegetation is a useful buffer during storm events.

If you are looking for sea views in a new home, place the dwelling further back on the section and elevate it to get a view over the top of the vegetated strip. For those with established dwellings, try to enhance any vegetation buffer you already have and consider putting in a low earth bund, well behind the high tide line. Both methods will help absorb the power of a big winter storm.

If you decide to carry out any earthworks within 50m of the Coastal Marine Area, on the open coast, you must apply for a resource consent from the Regional Council. This is to ensure that new earthworks do not worsen the risk of erosion.

Council staff can advise about options for combating coastal erosion, or check the NIWA reports for Granity and other areas on our website at: http://www.wcrc.govt.nz/environmental_management/coastal.



High seas associated with spring tides and stormy weather spilled over onto the Coast Road north of Greymouth in January 2006.

Make your kitchen waste work for you

If you want a great garden then get into composting!!! You can compost almost anything from your kitchen or garden, and it is one of the best ways to reduce the amount of rubbish that we put out for collection. Two options are:

- Having a bin in the garden to simply mix your garden and kitchen waste (but not meat!) and slowly allowing it to compost. You need to occasionally stir and check it to make sure it doesn't get too wet or dry, should produce lovely compost to use for your new seeds next year. Even if you're not a gardener it is a great way to prevent your kitchen and garden waste going to the landfill.
- The Bokashi system involves having two small bins, one stacked inside the other, which are kept under the kitchen bench. You can put all kitchen scraps, including meat, into it and then add a dry powder that makes the composting 50% faster and reduces any smells. The unit produces a concentrated liquid that is then used to feed your plants. The Bokashi unit and powder refills are available from the Westland District Council and Mitre 10 Greymouth.

All District Councils and the Regional Council have a free leaflet available called "Garden Compost Guidelines." Check out our website for other waste reducing tips.

Plume moth poised to strike West Coast ragwort

A plume moth introduced to New Zealand to help the fight against the pest plant ragwort is showing early positive results on the West Coast. The moth is one of two agents brought in after the ragwort flea beetle, successful elsewhere in New Zealand, had previously made little impact in the Coast's wet conditions.

NZ Landcare Trust's West Coast Ragwort Project Coordinator Caryl Coates says plume moths emerged from over-wintering just in time for this year's ragwort season. Caryl has monitored seven previous Plume Moth release sites so far this season and has found the agent at each one - a good sign of their ability to persist in Coast conditions. However, the crown boring moth, also brought in to fight ragwort, has not wintered well in the rearing cages, and has not been found in field surveys.

Caryl is currently releasing plume moths from Karamea to Haast and monitoring past release sites. The Ragwort Control Trust Committee has set a \$400 fee for moth releases.

For more information on releases, contact Caryl on (03) 731 1805 or at caryl.coates@landcare.org.nz.