



# THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

**MEDIA RELEASE – 1 August 2019**

## **State of the Environment Summary**

The West Coast Regional Council has released its 2018 State of Environment (SOE) report which provides a snapshot of the state and trends of some of our region's natural resources, including land cover, water quality, water quantity and air quality.

Usually produced every three years for various resources, this time the SOE report combines all of the monitoring data into the one document, complemented with an easy to read summary for the benefit of West Coast residents interested to find out more.

Planning, Science and Innovation Manager, Hadley Mills, says the report shows how things are changing over time given the pressures experienced throughout the region.

"The summary shows that for the parameters we measure, the West Coast is generally in good shape compared to other regions, but there are definitely areas for improvement," said Mr Mills.

Council monitors groundwater, lakes, rivers, coastal beaches, and air quality across the region at 85 sites. A range of environmental data on the quantity of water on the West Coast, including rainfall, river flows, and groundwater levels is also collected. This data makes up the SOE report.

The West Coast Regional Council is the smallest Regional Council in New Zealand, managing the fifth largest area in the country, yet must deliver the same services and functions as the other regions of New Zealand.

Mr Mills says that while the SOE report helps Council and communities to identify where to focus on, resourcing is one of the biggest challenges in undertaking the work.

"We are continuing to grow our investment in science and monitoring in response to the greatest resource pressures, and in specific areas as directed by Central Government policy.

In the future we hope to widen the range of parameters we monitor, particularly in the cultural monitoring space. We are currently working with Poutini Ngāi Tahu to consider the best way to do this."

A copy of the SOE Report can be found on the Council website at [www.wcrc.govt.nz/environment/state-of-environment](http://www.wcrc.govt.nz/environment/state-of-environment)

**Further information:**

State of Environment (SOE) monitoring is a key function of regional councils under the Resource Management Act (RMA).

The SOE Report is a summary document for the general public, backed up by a comprehensive technical report. The technical report will be released later in 2019.

Some key findings include:

- Phosphorus levels either improved, or showed no change, at 93% of monitored sites, declining at 7% of sites. Levels at 60% of monitored sites showed no change.
- Invertebrate communities indicative of poor water quality were found at 13% of monitored sites, fair quality but typical of moderate impacts on water quality were found at 18% of monitored sites, with levels at 68% of sites good to excellent.
- Ammonia levels improved at 38% of monitored sites indicating potential improvements in the management of discharges, with levels at 62% of sites showing no change.
- Irrigation allocation has increased by 161% since 2012.
- Hydroelectric power is the largest consented user of water in the region.
- The Grey River catchment has the largest number of consented water takes out of the three districts.
- The demand for groundwater has more than doubled since 2012.
- Long term air quality monitoring of the airshed in Reefton has shown improvement.
- Most rain recorders in the region measured lower than average rainfall in 2012, 2013 and 2107. Rainfall was average, or slightly above, for 2014, 2015 and 2016.
- The Cropp River at waterfall received a whopping 11,228mm of rain in 2017.
- Significant work undertaken in the Lake Brunner catchment over the past decade continues to pay dividends with the lake still classified as 'low nutrient'.

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Media contact

Hadley Mills | Planning, Science and Innovation Manager | West Coast Regional Council | 021 229 0024