



# THE WEST COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL

**MEDIA RELEASE – 25 January 2022**

## **Reflecting on a productive year**

2021 was another big year for the West Coast Regional Council who, despite a range of challenges, achieved a number of great results for communities throughout the region.

Over the 2020/21-year, Council's compliance team monitored 1,268 of the 5,682 consents it administers. For consents that require monitoring, 92% of these were monitored (the national average across all regional councils and unitary authorities is 83%). A total of 131 environmental incidents were reported over 2020/21 with the Compliance Team responding as appropriate 100% of the time (the national average was 99%).

Acting Consents and Compliance Manager, Colin Helem, said that these figures had further improved on those reported for the previous year.

"The Regional Council has a huge workload in the consents and compliance monitoring space. This is only getting bigger as new central government regulations come into effect across freshwater, biodiversity and resource management. However, we are doing our best to work with our communities and provide them the information where appropriate to work within the regulations."

Council makes submissions and responds to other resource management documents or proposed government policies or standards where these may affect the West Coast. This enables Council to advocate for the interests of our West Coast communities.

"While the first half of 2021 was relatively quiet in this space, our policy team ended up making submissions on 11 different policy documents ranging from the *Phasing out of fossil fuels* to *The future of Local Government review*," said Rachel Vaughan, Acting Planning and Science Manager. "It's been really important to keep reminding Wellington that the West Coast is not like other regions and sometimes a more bespoke approach is needed to address the concerns facing New Zealand."

The common theme throughout the submissions made involved protecting the rights of the West Coast. This included advocating for transition support to change from mining, economic incentives for protection of the region's indigenous vegetation and water bodies, and support for innovation and changes in technology

A whopping 621 submissions were received from ratepayers on Council's Long-term Plan Consultation Document in September 2021. This was an unprecedented response and was met with appreciation from Councillors to have so many involved in the process.

Feedback from the Westport community in the Long-term Plan process saw the commencement of the survey and design work for a comprehensive flood protection scheme for Westport. A flood modeling

review to ensure that the protection scheme meets the recommended level of service consulted on is currently being peer reviewed. Construction is anticipated to begin in the second half of 2022.

Considerable progress was made on Te Tai o Poutini Plan, the combined District Plan for the West Coast, after the Plan Committee made the decision to increase the pace on plan development. An Exposure Draft was approved for release by the Committee in December 2021. This will be available for feedback from 26 January 2022 providing the opportunity for the community, stakeholders and anyone who may use the district plans now, to look at the direction the plan is headed and provide input before the Proposed Plan is notified in July.

Jo Armstrong, Project Manager for Te Tai o Poutini Plan, was rapt with the progress made on getting the Plan to this point. "It has been a significant effort from all of those involved to get to this stage. We couldn't have done it without input from our planners, staff from all four Councils and our iwi partners, our Committee representatives and stakeholders, we have been meeting with to work through various provisions," Mrs Armstrong said.

Weather events, and more general natural processes, impacted several flood and erosion protection schemes managed by Council during the year. Contractors were quickly engaged to undertake emergency works on the Hokitika Seawall and Franz Josef stopbank to ensure they could once again deliver on their agreed level of service.

"We are fortunate to have such skilled contractors here on the West Coast," said Randal Beal, Council's Operations Director. "Emergency works are often undertaken in tricky conditions and situations, and the end result has been phenomenal."

The year finished with the appointment of Heather Mabin, who was the Acting Chief Executive for much of 2021, to the role permanently.

"I am delighted with the way staff have just got on and done the job they are here to do on behalf of the community," Ms Mabin said. "This is a Council that constantly punches above its weight, dealing with a significant workload with a small, but very talented and dedicated, workforce."

In comparison to other regions of New Zealand, the Coast is special. We have an abundance of water, we have thermal energy, we have gold and other minerals. In 2022, the West Coast Regional Council will continue to work with the community to protect the Coast for the future."

2022 looks to be equally busy with work to progress the Infrastructure Resilience projects in Greymouth, Hokitika and Franz Josef, construction of flood protection assets for Westport, further implementation of government policy, release of the proposed Te Tai o Poutini Plan in July and local government elections in October.

"This is a year that our communities will need to be involved and I encourage them to do so."

More information on these projects will feature on our website [www.wcrc.govt.nz](http://www.wcrc.govt.nz) and promoted through Council's Facebook page during the year.

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