

Our Region

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER
2009

NEWS FROM THE GREATER WELLINGTON REGIONAL COUNCIL

Smile, it's spring!

Taking it to the streets

Walking school buses

Getting the good soil

Helping farmers

Desex your cat

Save native birds,
lizards and insects



Please recycle
Produced sustainably

Contents

- 4 Protecting our soils for the future
- 6 Birds beat possums
- 7 News in brief
- 8 Desex your cat

Above: Taking action for the environment at a Plateau School planting day – (l-r) Anahira Warren-Thomson, Astaria Rangi, Jack Langerveld and Meridian's Lizzy Baker

Cover: This gorgeous creature is a green gecko – one of our wonderful native lizards. Find out how you can protect native lizards from cats by going to the sustainability tips on p8. Photo courtesy of Richard Romijn

Contact your Regional Councillor

KAPITI

Nigel Wilson
T 04 905 0583
M 027 242 4105
nigel.wilson@gw.govt.nz



LOWER HUTT

Peter Glensor
T 04 586 4119
F 04 586 4118
M 027 241 5152
peter.glensor@gw.govt.nz



Sandra Greig
T/F 04 586 0847
M 027 640 8681
sandra.greig@gw.govt.nz



Prue Lamason
T 04 566 7283
F 04 566 2606
M 021 858 964
prue.lamason@gw.govt.nz



PORIRUA-TAWA

John Burke
T 04 233 0377
F 04 233 0317
M 027 444 1483
john.burke@gw.govt.nz



Barbara Donaldson
T/F 04 237 0773
M 021 976 747
barbara.donaldson@gw.govt.nz



UPPER HUTT

Rex Kirton
T/F 04 528 4751
M 021 435 277
rex.kirton@gw.govt.nz



WAIRARAPA

Ian Buchanan
T 06 304 9553
F 06 304 9546
M 027 282 2833
ian.buchanan@gw.govt.nz



WELLINGTON

Judith Aitken
T 04 475 8969
M 027 769 6424
judith.aitken@gw.govt.nz



Sally Baber
T 04 476 3116
M 027 476 3116
sally.baber@gw.govt.nz



Paul Bruce
T/F 04 972 8699
M 021 027 19370
paul.bruce@gw.govt.nz



Chris Laidlaw
T 04 934 3143
F 04 934 3148
M 027 425 4668
chris.laidlaw@gw.govt.nz



Fran Wilde, Chair
T 04 802 0346
F 04 384 5023
M 021 888 075
fran.wilde@gw.govt.nz



Our Region is produced sustainably

Print – GEON

Paper from “well managed forests” produced in FSC (Forest Stewardship Council) ISO14001 certified mills, elemental chlorine and acid free. Ink is 100% eco-friendly soy/mineral-based.

Design – Moxie

Sustainable Business Awards finalist, Get Sustainable Challenge participant and working towards carbon neutrality.

RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE

Greater Wellington Regional Council
PO Box 11646, Manners Street
Wellington 6142, 0800 496 734

ISSN 1177-0619
GW/COM-G-09/184

What does Greater Wellington do?

Water supply to reservoirs

Delivers high-quality treated water to the main reservoirs in each city.

Environmental management

Ensures the region's natural resources are used appropriately.

Regional parks and forests

Maintains a network of regional parks and forests for recreational use.

Metlink buses and trains

Coordinates and funds the region's Metlink public transport network.

Transport planning

Develops long-term plans for the region's transport network.

Emergency management

Coordinates civil defence emergency management for the region.

Flood protection

Helps communities protect themselves from the effects of flooding.

Pest control

Works with landowners to target pest plants and animals, and eradicate bovine Tb.

Harbour safety

Looks after navigational safety in Wellington and Porirua harbours, and the region's coastline.

Land management

Works with landowners to prevent or reduce soil erosion.

Regional economic development

Promotes the Wellington Regional Strategy – a sustainable economic-growth strategy.



www.gw.govt.nz

Welcome to *Our Region* – the Greater Wellington Regional Council's quarterly magazine. There's news and information on the work we are doing for a better region, and how you can participate to make our region truly sustainable. Your feedback is appreciated. Please contact Greater Wellington on 0800 496 734 or info@gw.govt.nz

Taking it to the streets

Plimmerton School children and their parents are taking to the streets instead of using their cars – and enjoying the difference

Greater Wellington has helped the school set up a travel plan, aimed at reducing traffic congestion around the school by getting kids and parents out of cars and onto more active means of transport.

Claire Anderson, the school's travel committee coordinator, says six walking school buses were set up earlier this year. "Fewer children walk in winter but in good weather they are really popular. Kids enjoy the walk and parents like it because we can combine our morning exercise with dropping our kids off at school."

Also, parents have been encouraged to drop off and pick up children at Plimmerton Domain and walk them through the station subway. Residents have been asked to take extra care when driving because more children are on the streets, and safety concerns have been addressed with the New Zealand Transport Agency and local council.

Seven months on and the school grounds are noticeably less congested, new friendships are being forged on the buses and parents are enjoying a greater sense of community.



(l-r) Brianna Norris, Kate Powell, George Powell, Hollie Anderson, Emma Duncan, Joshua Humphries and Brianna's mum Emma (in the background) are just some of Plimmerton School's walking school bus ambassadors

Sign up for a spectacular walk



"Absolutely beautiful", "a wonderful environment right on our doorstep"... These are just a couple of the glowing reviews for Greater Wellington's monthly Wainuiomata Catchment Walking Tour. You'll see some of the best native bush in the region, learn about our top-grade water supply system, and the walks are free.

Book your place:
joanne.hunwick@gw.govt.nz
04 526 5332

Weeds, be gone!

Upper Hutt's Plateau School has transformed a weed-infested hillside thanks to a new environmental action fund

The school recently received \$2,600 from the Meridian Take Action Fund to help it eliminate pest plants from its hillside and grow native trees and shrubs.

"Our vision is to improve bird and insect habitats, and create an environment for the students where they can be educated about the importance of native species," says Plateau School Principal Nigel Frater.

Our vision is to improve bird and insect habitats

The fund helps schools take on environmental projects in their school or local community. It's worth \$10,000 per year for three years and is open to schools that participated, or are participating, in Greater Wellington's Take Action programme.

Find out more about the Meridian Take Action Fund:
www.gw.govt.nz/meridian-fund

Plateau School pupil Bruce Sonam Sherpa with his grandfather Bruce Austin



PROTECTING FOR THE

Did you know that half of the region's land is taken up with pastoral farming? This important part of our region's economy must be managed sensibly and sustainably...

Protecting our soils is crucial if we are to keep farming in the future. But much of it is threatened by erosion, with more than 10% of the region's land classified as "erosion prone" – land that has been cleared for farming and is in danger of washing away.



Greater Wellington's Darryl Waru, harvesting poplar "poles" at the Akura Nursery for erosion-prone hillsides

That's where the role of soil conservation and Greater Wellington's Land Management team fits in. The team's manager Dave Cameron says soil conservation in the Wellington region began in the 1960s, mainly in the eastern Wairarapa hill country. "Much of the area is steep and has soil that comes from soft rocks. When these soils get wet enough and there are no trees to help stabilise them, they start slipping or slumping down the hillsides. On the farm this means big, ugly scars that don't produce anything for many years. Too much of this will threaten the existence of a farm."

Water quality suffers when streams, rivers, harbours and coastal areas get regular doses of dirt and mud

Dave says that erosion can also cause environmental problems downstream. "Water quality suffers when streams, rivers, harbours and coastal areas get regular doses of dirt and mud. The plants and animals living in the water don't do as well. Fish aren't as plentiful, and swimming and other water sports are affected."



An eroded hillside

Treating erosion

There are two main methods to treat erosion. "The first is to convert erosion-prone land to forestry or allow it to revert to native bush. This is for land that will probably never be sustainable for grazing in the long term," says Dave.

"The second method is to plant poplar and willow trees among pasture land – this is for slopes that are still suitable for grazing but need a bit of extra stability. Poplar and willow have very fast-growing roots that help bind the soil and stop it getting waterlogged."

Dave says an average of 70 trees per hectare is sufficient to protect land from eroding and keep it contributing to the regional economy.

OUR SOILS FUTURE

In order to ensure a quality supply of poplars and willows, Greater Wellington established the Akura Soil Conservation Nursery in Masterton in 1986. The nursery grows “poles” – these are cuttings from willows and poplars that are about three metres high and planted to protect land from erosion. Akura has produced more than 400,000 poles over the past 20 years, allowing an average of 400 hectares of land a year to be planted.

Down on the farm

Peter Gawith chairs the Wairarapa Hill Country Advisory Committee that advises Greater Wellington on land management issues. His family has spent generations farming in the eastern Wairarapa hill country, and both he and his father before him have spent much of their farming lives involved in soil conservation plantings. “It was something we had to do for the good of the land and the future of our farm,” says Peter.

D The soil and its productivity is our livelihood – it makes sense to look after it

He says soil conservation is increasingly important as more severe storms, which are likely to result from climate change, bring an increased risk of erosion. “The soil and its productivity is our livelihood – it makes sense to look after it.”

Help is on hand for land

Wellington Regional Erosion Control Initiative

A partnership between Greater Wellington, central government and landowners will treat an extra 300 hectares of land each year, bringing the annual total to 700 hectares of new soil conservation. Find out more: Dave Cameron, 06 370 5662.

Afforestation Grant Scheme

This is a government scheme to promote new forests as a way to reduce the impact of climate change. Priority is being given to erosion-prone land. Greater Wellington is helping landowners join the scheme and plant new forests. Find out more: Dave Cameron, 06 370 5662.

Wellington region’s land use

- 48% pastoral farming
- 35% native forest and scrub
- 9% settlements and other uses
- 8% exotic forest
- 1.8 million sheep
- 156,000 beef cattle
- 72,000 dairy cows



Peter Gawith’s farm, east of Carterton, has had more than 50 years of soil conservation plantings to keep the property stable and productive



Birds beat possums

Kaka are turning up in Kilbirnie, kakariki are colonising the Kapiti Coast and whitehead are back in Belmont for the first time in over a century. Flocks of tui and kereru are common and people are hearing bellbirds in their gardens again

Greater Wellington's Ray Clarey says more than 10 years of possum and rat control in reserves and private bush blocks has helped native birds make a comeback. "Possums and rats eat the flowers and berries that our native birds eat. They eat the eggs and chicks too. With fewer possums and rats, the birds thrive and their chicks have a better chance of surviving."

Ray says Greater Wellington carried out possum and rat control on 20,000 hectares of reserves, regional parks and private land around the region last year. Greater Wellington's BioWorks team also carries out large possum control operations across the region each year to help eliminate bovine Tb.

"All this predator control means there are more native birds and they can use more parts of our region," says Ray. "Rare birds such as kaka and kakariki, that have been limited to sanctuaries and islands, can spend time in our parks and gardens."

The BioWorks team will be doing large possum control operations for bovine Tb over the next nine months in Eastern Hutt, Mangaroa/Kaitoke, Otaki and Mount Bruce.

Prevention is better than cure

A Greater Wellington programme to help businesses in north Wellington reduce their impact on the environment is having a positive effect on a local stream

Thirty businesses in Grenada North Business Park were chosen to join the Take Charge pollution prevention programme following repeated pollution incidents in Takapu Stream. The programme assesses their facilities, activities and management procedures, provides tips to prevent pollution, and educates management and staff about environmental laws.

"Before the Take Charge assessment, many businesses were unaware of the relationship between their activities and the water quality in nearby streams," says Greater Wellington's Al Cross. "The education and advice they've received has led to changes in the way these businesses operate and increased their awareness of regional rules and legislation. We're also seeing a trend towards fewer callouts and fewer serious pollution incidents affecting Takapu Stream."

Coq Au Vin – a division of poultry producer Tegel Foods – joined the programme three years ago. Business Manager Karl Campbell says it was an opportunity to see how well their procedures were working and learn ways to do things better.



Coq Au Vin staff members have taken charge of their environmental impact. (l-r) Peato Niko, Taisi Ofoia and Harry Peita

"The programme reinforced what we are doing and raised staff awareness about their environmental responsibilities," says Karl. "Not everyone realised that whatever runs into the stormwater drain at the factory ends up in the stream that runs past your house and eventually to the beach where you swim."

Al Cross says that Coq Au Vin is a great example to other businesses. "By taking part in the programme, they're taking responsibility for their environmental impact and making changes that will benefit generations to come. I hope other businesses will do the same."

Find out more about Take Charge: www.gw.govt.nz/takecharge

Win a survival pack

Help your family survive a disaster. By completing an online questionnaire on Greater Wellington's website, you could win one of four prize packs filled with emergency supplies. This promotion is part of Greater Wellington's lead-up to Disaster Awareness Week (11-17 October).

Be in to win: www.gw.govt.nz/disaster-awareness

New GW website

Check out our new, improved website. On the homepage you'll find news you can use, such as information on environmental events, public consultations and environmental monitoring results (eg, water quality). We've also made it easier to find information on regional parks, resource consents, emergencies and hazards, and the region's transport network.

www.gw.govt.nz

Too mulch!

Mulch your garden this spring – it's a great way to fight summer dryness. Mulch locks in more moisture, slows weed growth, and keeps your garden looking good with less effort and water. For more about mulch and other garden water conservation tips, see:

www.bethedifference.gw.govt.nz

Waiwhetu Stream clean-up

The transformation of Waiwhetu Stream in Lower Hutt is well underway. Flood protection work began in July and the clean-up of contaminated sediment will begin in October, taking around six months to complete. Hundreds of native plants will be gradually established to encourage a healthy ecosystem.

Wanted: pest plant

Noogoora bur (*Xanthium occidentale*) is an upright weed that grows up to 1.5 metres. It's usually found in pasture and wasteland, and has large serrated leaves that are dark green on top and pale green underneath. The fruit are covered in many little hooks (commonly referred to as "burs"). The burs can attach to livestock fleece and coats, making them unmarketable. Noogoora bur is unpalatable to stock and therefore reduces available grazing area.

Seen it? Contact us: 0800 496 734, pest.plants@gw.govt.nz

Photo: Tim Senior, Environment Bay of Plenty



Noogoora bur



Metlink web makeover

Everything has changed at www.metlink.org.nz – except the address! Greater Wellington's public transport information website has a brand new look and lots of exciting new features. You can subscribe to RSS feeds for the latest Metlink news and information, and plan your journey using state-of-the-art maps. If you have a smart phone you can get Metlink information at your fingertips. Check out the new site today and enjoy the difference.

Finding your way around Metlink fares

Everything you need to know about Metlink fares is available in a new brochure, available at Metlink stockists now. The brochure includes the new Airport Flyer fares, and contains easy-to-use sections about prices and tickets for children, Super Gold cardholders and other concessionary fares.

Preparing for the new trains

A great deal of work is being done on our rail network to get ready for the new Matangi trains, due to begin arriving from 2010. Signalling and electrical equipment is being upgraded and several station platforms will need to be altered to cater for the bigger trains. A third line is being created between Kaiwharawhara and Wellington Railway Station to widen the bottleneck near the station and reduce queuing times. Check www.metlink.org.nz for the latest information about station and line closures while the work is being done.



Greater Wellington's public transport network
0800 801 700 www.metlink.org.nz



Sustainability tips

Desex your cat

Cats are natural hunters and love to catch birds, lizards and even cicadas and moths. This can be a problem if the animals they are catching are rare or endangered.

Unplanned cat breeding can increase the risk – unwanted cats often become wild cats, feeding on native birds and insects in the bush. By desexing (spaying or neutering) your cat, you'll help to reduce the number of wild cats in your neighbourhood.

Be a responsible cat owner:

- Desex your cat
- Keep your cat indoors at night (this reduces opportunities to catch birds)
- Never abandon your cat (abandoned pets get hungry and go hunting). Take unwanted pets to your local SPCA instead

More sustainability tips
www.bethedifference.gw.govt.nz

Calendar of events

20 SEPTEMBER

Pelorus Trust Fun Run

Hutt River Trail
www.hvmc.org.nz/Pelorus/pelorusindex.htm

22 SEPTEMBER

World Carfree Day

1 OCTOBER

Buggywalk

10.30am-12.30pm
 Wellington Botanic Gardens
 Meet: The Dell
www.buggywalk.co.nz

11 OCTOBER

XTERRA Trail Running Series, Race No 3

Maungakotukutuku Valley (Akatarawa Forest)
www.xterranz.com

11-17 OCTOBER

Disaster Awareness Week

www.gw.govt.nz/disaster-awareness

11 OCTOBER, 8 & 22 NOVEMBER, & 13 DECEMBER

Wainuiomata Catchment Walking Tours

Bookings essential: 04 526 5332,
joanne.hunwick@gw.govt.nz
www.gw.govt.nz/events

12 OCTOBER 2009 – 1 APRIL 2010

Wairarapa Walk or Wheel Wednesday Challenge

Encouraging Wairarapa school children to walk, cycle, skateboard or scooter to school.
 Sign up: 06 370 5634,
rebecca.jamieson@gw.govt.nz

24 OCTOBER

350 Climate Action Festival

www.350.org.nz

14 NOVEMBER

Rimutaka Railway Run and Walk

www.coolrunning.co.nz/calendar

12 DECEMBER

Home to Pub

Multisport event from Whitemans Valley, through Pakuratahi Forest, ending in Martinborough.
www.hometopub.co.nz

See www.gw.govt.nz/events for a community planting day near you



At the ready – Greater Wellington's Luke Faithfull and Christina Parnell-Harris

A helping hotline

Have you noticed paint, diesel or mud in your local stream?

"If you see something that looks wrong, it probably is. The sooner we find out about it, the sooner we can act," says Greater Wellington's Nic Conland.

Greater Wellington's Environmental Protection team responds to more than 1,100 incidents each year, including oil spills, dirt from earthworks, and odours from factories and landfills.

If an environmental regulation is broken, Greater Wellington can take a range of actions from a warning letter to a fine. In serious cases, Greater Wellington may prosecute.

However, help is on hand for businesses, says Nic. "Through our Take Charge pollution prevention programme, we give businesses support and advice to prevent incidents from happening in the first place."

What you can do:

- Call the 24-hour Environmental Protection Hotline 0800 496 734 if you see pollution occurring
- Find out more about Take Charge: www.gw.govt.nz/takecharge (see p6 for a Take Charge success story)